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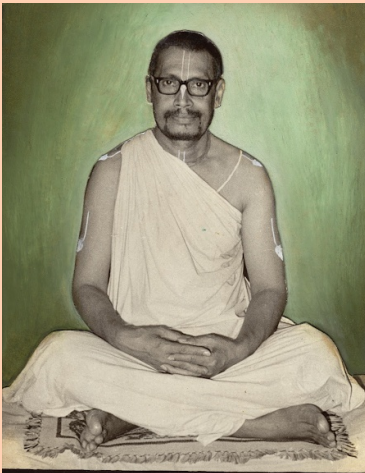
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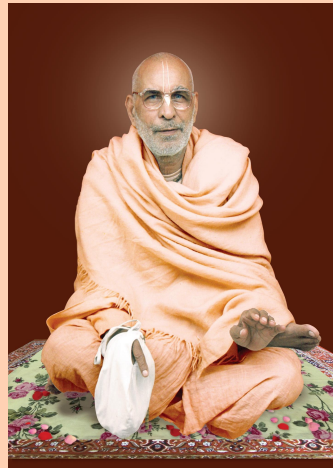
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Śrīla Prabhupāda's Upadeśāmṛta

(The Nectarean Instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda)

(Part Two)

Śrī Bhakti-prajñāna Gauḍīya Vedānta University Publication, Hesaraghatta, Bengaluru-560088

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The Disappearance Day of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda

(From *Śrī Prabandhāvalī*,
A Collection of Devotional Essays
by His Divine Grace Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta
Nārāyaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja)

Today is the anniversary of the day of separation from *nitya-līlāpraviṣṭa oṁviṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata* Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. It is the day of *pañcamī*, and he also appeared on *pañcamī*. He took birth in the home of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who is an eternal associate of both Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Just as the sage Bhagīratha brought the Gaṅgā to this world, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was the great personality who brought the current of *bhakti* to this world in the modern era. When the so-called *gosvāmīs* were making a business out of *bhakti* while engaging in varieties of worldly enjoyment, when in the name of Mahāprabhu so many kinds of bogus philosophies were prevalent, such as *sakhī-bhekī*, *smārta-jāti*, *sahajiyā*, etc.—at that time Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura came. After that, Prabhupāda appeared in the form of his son, Bimalā Prasāda. If these two great personalities had not appeared, then *śuddha-bhakti* would not exist in the world today. And from the time that they disappeared, society began reverting back to its previous condition. At first there were thirteen known *sahajiyā* cults, then our Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī, counted thirty-nine. And how many there are now, no one knows.

I am also seeing how things are gradually changing. We saw how renounced the devotees were before. For instance, we never used to see socks on the feet of any Vaiṣṇava, and we never saw devotees wearing such sweaters and *cādaras* as we do now.

They only wore the bare necessities of clothing and a cheap blanket, even as they attended *maṅgala-ārati* in the morning cold. It is only after the disappearance of Prabhupāda that devotees can be seen to wear these other things. They would live with such simplicity, eating only *śāk*, rice and a thin dahl, but in comparison to them, just look at the way we are living! And I speak for myself also—their knowledge, their renunciation and their spiritual conception were of such a high standard that in comparison to them we are so inferior.

The period between Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was an age of darkness for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. Living at that time were some real Vaiṣṇavas who performed real *bhajana*, but mostly, just as we still see sometimes today, the so-called Vaiṣṇavas only performed rituals for wages. When someone would die, people would call the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *bābājīs*, who would come and chant some ceremonial *kīrtana* and perform other rituals for wages. And there was so much misconduct in their behaviour. Seeing this, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura thought, "These people are Vaiṣṇavas? The conception of Mahāprabhu has completely vanished. What can be done?" He was very worried. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura endeavoured to his utmost, but changes did not come about in his lifetime to the degree that he would have liked. He went from town to town and village to village inaugurating the *nāma-haṭṭa*. In each village he would assemble four or five of the religious men, form a committee and hold programmes for *harināma-kīrtana* on Sundays. Gradually it spread from one village to the next, but overall his preaching was limited to Navadvīpa, Calcutta and the rest of Bengal.

He published the magazine *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, and through its medium he gradually published *ŚrīCaitanya-caritāmṛta* and other books in

instalments. He made a circle of devotees, and also revealed Navadvīpa-dhāma through his writings, although the scholars of society and the *sahajiyās* didn't accept his ideology. Then Prabhupāda appeared in Purī. Because Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a district magistrate, he would be transferred here and there, but he would always keep *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* with him and explain them to his son. Prabhupāda received so much instruction from him, but we should understand that Prabhupāda is an eternally liberated soul; there was no one in the world like him. Without being educated in school or college he learned all subjects very quickly and became a great scholar in Sanskrit. His English was so high that even professors of English could not understand it. I have been told by some learned Western devotees that when reading his *Brahma-saṁhitā*, they must repeatedly consult the dictionary. And his Bengali was also of such a high standard that even eminent scholars found it difficult to follow. He said that spiritual language should be like that; it shouldn't be so simple to understand. As one progresses spiritually by remaining in the company of Vaiṣṇavas, he will be able to understand spiritual vernacular.

At the age of seven or eight, Prabhupāda began worshipping a deity of Kūrmadeva, and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura gave him the *mahā-mantra* and other *mantras* for his *pūjā*. At the age of eighteen, all of the scholars of astronomy in Bengal gave him the title "Sarasvatī". After that he attended college but quarrelled with the professors, saying, "Will I learn from you, or teach you?" When he abandoned his studies, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and other family members became concerned, so they took him to Purī where he began studying at Satāsana Āśrama, which is where Svarūpa Dāmodara and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had lived. Vaiṣṇavas used to regularly

meet there, and now Śrīla Siddhāntī Mahārāja has a *maṭha* at that very place. There Prabhupāda began giving readings from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*. Present there were some *bābājīs* who considered themselves *rasika*, and when they heard Prabhupāda's explanations, they became inimical to him. Seeing this, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura took him away from there and had him begin teaching the son of the king of Tripura.

Prabhupāda had a great library of Vaiṣṇava literature, and having read through it thoroughly, he began teaching the son of the king in such a way that the boy accepted a chanting *mālā* and began wearing *tilaka*. He became detached from the world, and gradually, hearing *hari-kathā* became his sole interest. Seeing this, the queen became very annoyed and said to the king, "This boy will become useless! Then, after your demise, what will happen? Who will make offerings to our departed souls? He will become a renunciate, and everything will be ruined! Quickly get rid of this teacher. Give him four hundred rupees to go – we don't need money, we need a son!" That was approximately one hundred years ago, so you can imagine how much four hundred rupees was worth then. The queen put so much pressure on her husband that in the end he approached Prabhupāda and very humbly said, "It is a matter of great unhappiness that our family members are not in favour of you; they are afraid that the boy will take up *bhakti* and become a renunciate. I consider that it has been our great good fortune to have met a person like you and had our son educated by you, but the others don't understand." The king approached Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and offered the money to him, but without accepting it they left there.

Then Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura started a homeopathic shop. When the shop was unsuccessful, he thought, "I was not made to run a shop anyway,"

and he went and purchased some land in Māyāpura. After locating the birthplace of Mahāprabhu, he installed deities there of Gaura, Viṣṇupriyā and Lakṣmīpriyā, as well as small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa *mūrtis*. After Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's disappearance, Prabhupāda was determined to follow the Navadvīpa-dhāma *parikramā* that his father had written, and to attract people he invited great *kīrtana* performers to attend. He set up a large tent, thousands of people came for the *parikramā*, and there the *kathā* of *śuddha-bhagavad-bhakti* commenced.

Gradually, qualified youths of only sixteen, seventeen and eighteen years, whose hearts were soft and pure, came forward, and Prabhupāda made them into *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*. With great ease he was able to train them, but those who were over fifty years old, like parrots could not be taught anything new. Then devotees like our Guru Mahārāja, Bon Mahārāja, Bhakti Pradīpa Tīrtha Mahārāja, Bhakti Vilāsa Tīrtha Mahārāja, Araṇya Mahārāja and Narahari Prabhu came. In the beginning there in Māyāpura, Narahari Prabhu would offer *ārati* while Prabhupāda played the hand-held gong, and gradually the preaching started. The convention of *tridaṇḍi-sannyāsa* was established, and the result is that today the name and conception of Caitanya Mahāprabhu are being vigorously preached. Within eleven years, from 1926–37, preaching was spread everywhere, but before that, so much time was spent in merely setting the foundation. Prabhupāda published many magazines – daily, weekly, monthly – in the Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, Orissan (Odia), English and Assamese languages, and very easily we have all inherited the fruit of his endeavour. He established the Gauḍīya line very strictly with great endeavour, and there were so many difficulties in his preaching campaign that we cannot even imagine them. There was so much opposition to Prabhupāda's

preaching at that time that his disciples were not even allowed to enter the *mandiras* in Vṛndāvana or Navadvīpa.

Prabhupāda began culturing the creeper of devotion by cutting off all of the unnecessary branches and sub-branches. How? First of all he revised the *guru-paramparā*. He said that we are of Mahāprabhu's line, and he removed the names of those who were not fully perfected. After establishing the names of Brahmā, Nārada and Vyāsa, he went straight to Madhva. Prabhupāda accepted the names of those from whom the people of this world would get the most benefit, and mostly they were *brahmacārīs*. For the most part he didn't accept the names of those who had been *gṛhasthas* for a long time. After Madhva, he recognised some special personalities, and then he went to the name of Mādhavendra Purī. Everyone accepts him, and then from him there is Ṝśvara Purī, Svarūpa Dāmodara, the Six Gosvāmīs, and then Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī. At this point some had divided into the lines of Nityānanda Prabhu, Advaita Ācārya, Gadādhara Paṇḍita, Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, Lokanātha Gosvāmī and others, but Prabhupāda said, "We accept in our line those who are fully perfected souls, who know the correct *siddhānta* and who are *rasika*, wherever they are." In this way all of the various lines were represented in our *paramparā* in one place or another.

There are so many lines of disciplic succession, but Prabhupāda said that we will recognise the *guru-paramparā*, not the disciplic succession. The *guru-paramparā* is composed solely of those who were *bhāgavata-gurus*, even if they made no disciples and there is therefore no direct disciplic line coming from them. Some of them may not have initiated any disciples at all, but still they are *jagad-gurus*. In this way, with all-pervading vision he

collected all the *mahājanas* and made what is known as the *bhāgavata-paramparā* or *guru-paramparā*.

After the departure of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, so many familial disciplic lines arose, but Prabhupāda ignored them and gave recognition to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and then Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī. He accepted only those in whom he detected the real spiritual *siddhānta*. Simply receiving the *mantra* in one's ear and wearing a *dhotī* or other cloth given by the *guru* does not qualify one as the *guru's* successor. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did not receive any *mantra* from Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, so how was he his disciple? He was a disciple of his conception: his feelings towards Kṛṣṇa, his conception of *rasa* and his conception of *tattva*. This is a disciple. Most people can't understand this, but being able to see with such insight, Prabhupāda declared this to be our line. Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja was also not an initiated disciple of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, but he embraced all of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's sentiments and conceptions, and due to this his name appears next in the succession. At this point, all of the *bābājīs* said, "Whose disciple is Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī? Who gave him *sannyāsa*? Why doesn't he wear the same cloth as Sanātana Gosvāmī did? In our *sampradāya*, after Nityānanda Prabhu and Svarūpa Dāmodara, everyone wore white cloth, but we see that he wears saffron cloth and has accepted a *daṇḍa*. How can he do this?" But what relation does wearing either orange or white cloth have with *bhakti*? Is there any relation?

kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya
yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 8.128)

Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī* or a *sūdra*, if he knows *kṛṣṇa-tattva*, then he is a guru, so

what to speak of being a Vaiṣṇava? Prabhupāda was thinking, “We are not qualified to accept the dress that was worn by such great personalities as Rūpa, Sanātana, Jīva and Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. We will remain in the ordinary dress of *sannyāsīs* and will not accept the dress of *paramahaṁsa-bābājīs.* Remaining within the *varṇāśrama* system as *brahmacārīs* and *sannyāsīs*, we will keep the ideal of that paramahaṁsa dress above our heads. Otherwise, if we accept that dress and commit sinful activities, it will be aparādha at the feet of Rūpa and Sanātana.” Some *bābājīs* criticised him for training *brahmacārīs* and giving them the sacred thread, but our Guru Mahārāja said that those *bābājīs* were all fools, like animals. They wore paramahaṁsa dress and gave the elevated *gopī-mantra* to anyone and everyone who came, yet Prabhupāda was only training *brahmacārīs* and giving them instructions on how to control the senses—so which is correct? First Prabhupāda wanted us to understand what is *siddhānta*, i.e. *jīva-tattva, māyā-tattva and bhagavat-tattva*, and how to avoid *māyā* in the forms of *kanaka*(wealth), *kāminī* (women) and *pratiṣṭhā* (prestige)— these are the beginning instructions. *Gopī-bhāva* is very elevated; first we must understand that “I am *kṛṣṇa-dāsa*” and begin taking harināma. But these *bābājīs* immediately give their conception of *gopī-bhāva* to whoever approaches them; then they all chant “I am a *gopī*, I am a *gopī*” and in this way create a disturbance in society.

Every morning in our *maṭha* we sing the song in which Prabhupāda established the *bhāgavata-paramparā*: *kṛṣṇahaitecatur-mukha*... In his composing of this song, he accepted all of the great, perfected personalities from different lines and declared, “This is the line of Gaura.” If Prabhupāda had not come, then today would the name of Mahāprabhu and talks from *Bhagavad-gītā* and

ŚrīmadBhāgavatam be found anywhere? Here in Mathurā, in Vraja and everywhere else, *gaura-kīrtana* and *hari-kathā* are still going on and have not vanished. Therefore the world will forever remain indebted to Prabhupāda for his preaching. He never approached wealthy people, but he would take one *paisā* from each person he met. And our Guru Mahārāja did the same. Although he was from a wealthy family, he would take a wooden box with a slot in it into the market and also onto the trains, trams and buses. He would speak with people from all classes, and in this way the preaching spread in all directions. We should also engage in such a pure form of preaching, and not just remain idle after hearing this. As if giving an injection, you should all encourage others to start taking *harināma* and hearing this conception, whether you are a man or lady, married or unmarried. And don't think that because one is not educated he cannot do it. Did Haridāsa Ṭhākura have any college degree? Did Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and others? But their activities were first class, and their conceptions were extremely high.

We are regularly hearing *tattva* from scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta*, but how will others also get the opportunity to hear it? After hearing it we should take it to many other people, and this is the duty of each and every one of us. With great love we should take *harināma* and encourage others to chant it. We should hear *siddhānta* ourselves and then help others to understand it; that will give Prabhupāda great pleasure. To the very end of his life Prabhupāda said, "We are mere labourers; we are the peons of *bhagavat-kathā*." He never made himself a permanent living situation in an opulent temple, but always kept moving. These days we do things a little differently, but we should always try to follow not only

Prabhupāda's philosophical conception but the ideal he showed through his own behaviour as well.

These ideas serve as the very foundation of *bhakti*, and if this foundation is not established, then we will fall from hearing the higher levels of *kathā*. For instance, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written a song entitled *VibhāvarīŚeṣa*, which includes lines such as:

yāmuna-jīvana, keli-parāyaṇa,
mānasa-candra-cakora
nāma-sudhā-rasa, gāo kṛṣṇa-yaśa,
rākho vacana mana mora

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the life of the Yamunā, He is always engaged in amorous pastimes and He is the moon of the *gopīs'* hearts. Sing the glories of He whose name is pure *rasa*—O mind, always remember these words.

In our *maṭha* we sing this every day, and there is certainly some benefit in it, but do we understand the complete *bhāva* contained within it? Nothing remains outside these lines—not the *rāsa-līlā*, not the *Bhramara-gīta*, not the *Veṇu-gīta*, nothing. Everything is there, and all of the previous lines of this song are similarly saturated with both *rasa* and *tattva*. *Phula-śara-yojakakāma*—what is the meaning? The complete *kāma-gāyatrī* has come here. *Śara* means an arrow, an arrow of *kāma* (desire) which Kṛṣṇa places on His bow. How many of these arrows does Kṛṣṇa have? Five: His sidelong glances and His eyebrows, cheeks, nose and smile. So tell me, is there anything remaining outside these lines?

Helping the people of the world to understand these topics is the real task of the *guru-paramparā*—those who are conversant with *rasa*, the *dīkṣā-* and *śikṣā-gurus*. If we examine one line of this song after another, then for so many days so many lectures could be given, and our hearts would become full of *rasa* and divine bliss upon hearing their full meaning.

So much *bhāva* has been put into each word by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, and it is the same with the compositions of Narottama Ṭhākura and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura. To understand what our *ācāryas* have given, great intelligence and *bhāva* are required. And if we have such a *bhāva* in our hearts by which we can understand the poetry and the special characteristics of *ācāryas* like Prabhupāda, then wherever we may go, it will always remain with us.

In explaining the line *paraṁvijayateśrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam* from the first verse of Mahāprabhu's *Śikṣāṣṭaka*, Prabhupāda wrote that this is the Gauḍīya Maṭha's mode of worship. There are three stages: the beginning stage of *sādhana*, the intermediate stage of *bhāva*, and the final attainment produced by that *bhāva*, which is called *prema*. *Sādhana* is that practice by which *śuddha-sattva-bhāva* arises, and if it does not arise, what one is practising cannot be called *sādhana*. We can all examine ourselves and see if we are practising the *sādhana* that makes *bhāva* arise or not. Are the symptoms there, or not? We may not even have the proper aim in our *sādhana*. If someone is striking a match, what is his aim? To obtain a flame; and if after striking one match a flame is not obtained, then he will take another match and try again. Our endeavour to reach the *sādhya* (final attainment) through the practice of *sādhana* is like that. *Kṣud-anuvṛtti* (spiritual "hunger"), *tuṣṭi* (satisfaction) and *puṣṭi* (strength) – these three things should appear, and if they don't, then we are not really practising *sādhana* and cannot be called real *sādhakas*. Whatever we do should be done with this vision: "By performing this activity, *bhāva* for Kṛṣṇa will arise." Is the match producing a flame or not? If we see that our *sādhana* is producing attachment for material results such as *pratiṣṭhā*, then we are moving in the wrong direction. Therefore we should understand this point well: the

sole aim of *kīrtana* is to make *bhāva* arise.

Ceto-darpaṇa-mārjanam: in our practice of *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, have our minds become purified or not? Are our minds going towards wealth, material enjoyment and prestige? Do we consider material enjoyment to be poisonous or favourable to us? Material enjoyment is poison. Haridāsa Ṭhākura was taking *harināma* in a solitary place when a very beautiful woman approached him and said, "Prabhu, you will no longer have to cook for yourself. You won't have to fetch water, and I will also serve your *tulasī* plant. You can just chant *harināma* all day and I will perform all of your tasks. And if you become fatigued, I will massage your feet." But did Haridāsa Ṭhākura accept her?

All types of material enjoyment should be understood to be poison, whether one is a man or a woman. If we consider things like luxurious food and accommodation to be favourable to us, then the mirror of the mind will not be cleansed and the reflection of one's own spiritual form will not be visible. The mirror should be made pure; there should be no dust or anything on it. We should be able to see what is our illusory body, what is our spiritual body and what all of our faults are; but it is our great misfortune that instead we only see others' faults. The first type of contamination affecting our minds is thinking that we are the material body. We are eternal servants of Kṛṣṇa, but the most prevalent dust on the mirror of the mind is thinking that we are the material body. Endeavouring for the happiness of the body is dust on the mirror, or contamination on our minds.

There are so many *anarthas*: *svarūpa-bhrama* (bewilderment concerning one's actual form and nature), *asat-tṛṣṇā* (desire for temporary things), *hṛdaya-daurbalya* (weakness of heart) and *aparādha* (offences). Besides these, described in Viśvanātha

Cakravartī Ṭhākura's *Mādhurya-kādambinī*, are *utsāhamayī* (false confidence), *ghanataralā* (sporadic endeavour), *vyūḍha-vikalpā* (indecision), *viṣaya-saṅgarā* (combat with the senses), *niyamākṣamā* (inability to uphold vows) and *taraṅga-raṅgiṇī* (delighting in the material facilities produced by devotion).

Then there are four types of *aparādha*: *duṣkṛtottha* (arising from previous sins), *sukṛtottha* (arising from previous piety), *aparādhottha* (arising from offences in chanting) and *bhaktyuttha* (arising from imperfect service). When all of these are eradicated, then our real selves, the *ātmā*, will reflect in the mirror of the mind; but for now our vision is distorted. We consider the pain and happiness of the material body to be our own, and our worldly relations and worldly loss and gain to be related to our very selves. *Bhava-mahā-dāvāgni-nirvāpaṇaṁ*: this is the forest fire of material existence in which we are time and again taking birth.

When the mirror of the mind is purified, then this great fire will be extinguished and we will progress along the path of *sādhana* for *uttama-bhakti*, that devotion which is free from any tendencies towards *karma* or *jñāna*. That devotion will be *kleśa-ghnī*, that which burns away so many types of difficulties. It will not happen all at once, but gradually. First there is *śraddhā*, then *niṣṭhā*, and then we will move towards *ruci* and *āsakti* when our *anarthas* will have been mostly eradicated. However, those *anarthas* may still exist in root form. One may shave his head, but has even one hair completely disappeared? Its roots are still there, and hair will again appear after a couple of days. In the same way, when we have reached the stage of *āsakti*, only the roots of *anarthas* will remain; externally they will not be visible. If a favourable environment is given to them – that is, if we keep bad company or offend a

Vaiṣṇava – then they will reappear. But upon reaching the stage of *bhāva*, they will be finished forever.

Then there is *śubhadā*, which is of many varieties. In the worldly sense, *śubha* means having wealth, good progeny, position, fame and knowledge, and keeping the body healthy so that the effects of old age will not come prematurely. But what is real *śubha*? Having *ruci* for the name and *līlā-kathā* of Bhagavān and for the limbs of *bhagavad-bhajana-sādhana*. Having eagerness for these things is *śubha*, and that *śubha* is the lotus flower described by the words *śreyaḥ-kairava-candrikā-vitaraṇam*. If the rays of the moon fall upon it, it will bloom purely and without blemishes. How will such pure *bhakti* arise in the heart? The *śakti* of *harināma* is like the rays of the moon which make the lotus of the heart gradually bloom, taking it through the stages of *niṣṭhā*, *ruci*, *āsakti* and *bhāva*. When it fully blossoms, that is the stage of *prema*. But for the *śakti* of *harināma* to act in this way, our interest must be drawn away from material life. In the same way as two swords will not remain together in one scabbard, *māyā* and *bhakti* will not remain together in one's heart.

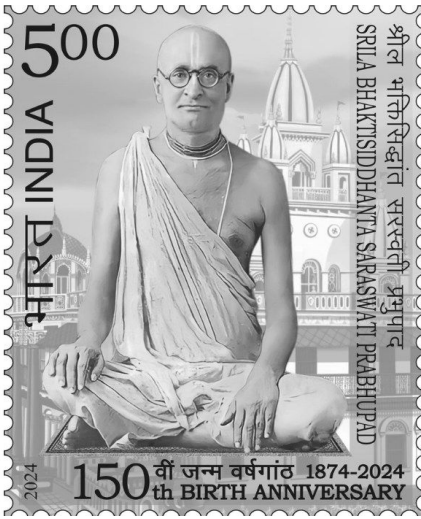
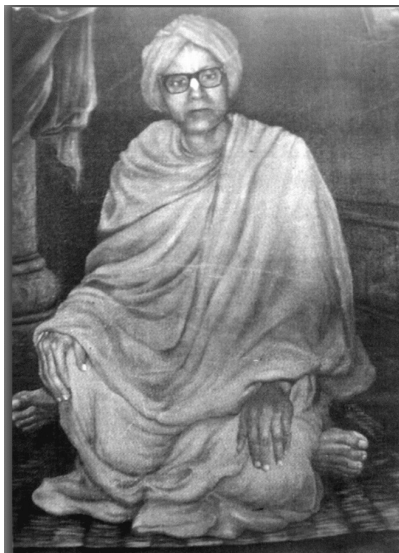
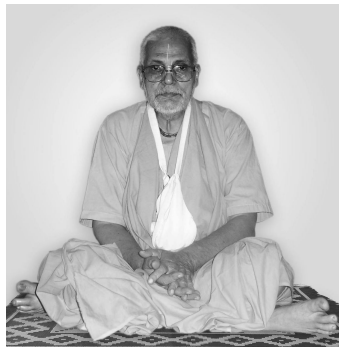
Vidyā-vadhū-jīvanam: *nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the very life of *vidyā-vadhū*. *Vidyā* is that by which we can know *jīva-tattva*, *māyā-tattva*, and ultimately Kṛṣṇa; it does not mean knowledge of mundane science or how to make money. Real *vidyā* is *bhakti* and ultimately assumes the form of the *vadhū*, or consort, of Kṛṣṇa. First there is *sādhana-bhakti*, then *bhāva-bhakti*, and finally *prema-bhakti*. After entering *prema-bhakti*, one's devotion develops through the stages of *sneha*, *māna*, *praṇaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga*, *bhāva* and finally *mahābhāva*. The embodiment of *mahābhāva* is Śrīmatī Rādhikā, who is the *vadhū*, or consort, of Kṛṣṇa. Over and above the *sandhinī-śakti*, the *saṁvit-* and *hlādinī-śaktis* fully manifest as *rādhā-bhāva*. This is *vidyā-vadhū*, and if even one ray of this

transcendental potency enters into our hearts, it is called *bhāva*.

Ānandāmbudhi-vardhanaṁprati-padam: if we are chanting *harināma* with this *bhāva*, then with every step we will experience increasing *ānanda*, divine joy. In the *mahā-mantra*, there is *kṛṣṇa-nāma* and also Hare, which means She who attracts Kṛṣṇa away to the *kuñja*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā. This *bhāva* is so deep that it has no end, and this is the *nāma*, so saturated with *rasa*, that Caitanya Mahāprabhu brought to this world. When we chant the *mahā-mantra* with this *bhāva*, then every step will submerge us deeper into the ocean of divine bliss. *Pūrṇāmṛtāsvādanam*—what is *pūrṇāmṛta*, the complete nectar? *Prema*, and one will perpetually relish it. Absorbed in chanting the name in this way, our *ācāryas* such as Jayadeva Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura could envision divine pastimes and compose such nectarean literatures. And *sarvātma-snapanam*—one will never desire to resurface from that ocean of nectar where there is not even a trace of *māyā*, meaning that they have entered into *svarūpa-siddhi*. This is the explanation of the first verse of Mahāprabhu's *Śikṣāṣṭaka* given by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda, whose return to Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa's eternal pastimes we are commemorating on this day.

* * *

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

The Honourable and Successful Prime Minister of India, Śrī Narendra Modi, released a ₹150 commemorative coin and postal stamp to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Auspicious Appearance of His Divine Grace Jagad-guru Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmi Prabhupāda. This event was part of the World Vaiṣṇava Convention 2024, organized by Gauḍīya devotees at Bhārata Maḍapam, Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, on February 8, 2024.

Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja

***Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa oṁ viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad* Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

***Nitya-līlā-praviṣṭa oṁ viṣṇupāda aṣṭottara-śata Śrī Śrīmad* Bhakti-vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja**

[January 08, 2024 was the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja in Vṛndāvana, India. The following is the *bhāva-anuvāda* of the *kathā* given by Śrīla Bhakti-vijñāna Bhāratī Gosvāmī Mahārāja for the same *tithi*, on December 19, 2014 and December 25, 2016.

Editors' input: Additional text has been included in square brackets to facilitate the flow of content.]

Today is a special *tithī*. It is the disappearance day of Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja. His name was Rūpa-vilāsa dāsa prior to taking *sannyāsa* from Śrīla Bhakti-bhūdeva Śrautī Gosvāmī Mahārāja. His Literary Contribution After

joining the maṭha, Śrī Rūpa-vilāsa dāsa served in the editorial department.

He edited and published Śrīla Prabhupāda's '*Upadeśāmṛta* — Questions and Answers' in two volumes, after the disappearance of Śrīla Prabhupāda. One will get answers to all their [*bhakti*-related] questions if they read this book. He published Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on Śrīla Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura's *Prārthanā* and *Śrī Prema-bhakti Candrikā*. He also published *Mantrārtha-dipikā* (elucidation of the *mantras*), *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Vedānta-sūtra, Guru-sevā* and many other books. He also wrote many series of articles for our '*Caitanya-vāṇī*.'

Niṣṭhā In Śrīla Prabhupāda

During the manifest presence of Śrīla Prabhupāda, if any family members of the brahmacarīs would come to the maṭha to take them back home, they would be directed to Śrī Rūpa-vilāsa dāsa, who would convincingly make them understand [that it was beneficial for their sons to stay in the maṭha]. When his own family members came to take him, the others said, "If Prabhupāda says, then he can go back." At that time, he said, "I will accept Prabhupāda's decision, but I cannot accept any verdict that keeps me away from his service." This was his specialty. I found his stance extremely remarkable.

Later, [when he established his own *maṭha*] Śrīla Bhakti-mayukha Bhāgavata Gosvāmī Mahārāja, would also unfailingly send some donation for the service of Śrīla Prabhupāda at his birth place, Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha in Purī. Such was his *niṣṭhā* in Śrīla Prabhupāda's service.

Impeccable *Ācāra* Dissipates Misunderstanding In Ekacakrā

In Ekacakrā, the birthplace of Nityānanda Prabhu, there was a propaganda that the Gauḍīya Maṭha was averse to the worship of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and hence acts against *siddhānta* (established scriptural tenets). But when Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja, a *brāhmaṇa* by birth from Ekacakrā itself, visited the temple, he paid *śāṣṭāṅga-praṇāmas* (prostrated obeisances) to the Deity after removing his upper cloth and glorifying Nityānanda Prabhu by saying His *praṇāma-mantra*. The *pujārī* was baffled seeing this [affectionate and reverential mood]. He considered, "Even those who worship Śrī Nityānanda here, don't pay obeisances like this! How can it be said that the Gauḍīya Maṭha does not regard Nityānanda Prabhu?" Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja also established a maṭha close to Ekacakrā. Gradually, this misconception was dissipated by the impeccable precept (*ācāra*) of Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja and other disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda.

A Service Opportunity

I got the opportunity to serve Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja only on one occasion. He stayed at our maṭha on his visit to Māyāpura in his advanced age. He went to Yoga-pīṭha, Śrī Caitanya Maṭha, etc for *darśana*. Śrīla Bhakti-kusuma Śramaṇa Gosvāmī Mahārāja was working in the *patrikā* department in Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, so Śrīla Bhāgavata Mahārāja honoured *prasādam* with him. It was his *niyama* to taste everything that was offered. We had also prepared one variety of rice from Assam for him, which was very delectable and of excellent quality. He praised it very much and asked, "Where did you get this from? I have never tasted rice like this before!" On his visit to Vṛndāvana, he had stayed in our *maṭha*, going for *darśanas* from there everyday. The

appearance and disappearance days of Vaiṣṇavas are both equally important.

Even simply remembering a Vaiṣṇava's name constitutes serving him. And this becomes the cause of our auspiciousness. That is why it is an offense not to glorify them on their *tithīs*. If you do not know anything about them, then even by taking their name, all auspiciousness is achieved.

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Śrīla Prabhupāda's transcendental rule

Śrīla Prabhupāda had a transcendental rule that when anyone offered him *praṇāma*, he offered his greetings back by folding his hands and saying, *dāso 'smi*: "I am your servant." Seeing such humble behaviour on the part of his Gurudeva, Śrī Vinodabihārī Brahmacārī always hid while offering him his *praṇāma*. Śrīla Prabhupāda had another transcendental practice: he always addressed his disciples and others using the honorific '*āp*' (you). But because he was so satisfied with Śrī Vinodabihārī's intimate service he would use '*tū*', '*tuī*' (the most informal way of saying 'you') and other loving words to address him. Very few amongst Prabhupāda's disciples received such good fortune.

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Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Upadeśāmṛta
(The Nectarean Instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda)

Question 226—What topics (*viṣaya*) should we contemplate?

Answer—No subject matter in this material world is worthy of our contemplation (*cintana*). Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is Absolute Reality (*satya-vastu*); He, who is always surrounded by His eternal associates (*parikaras*), is the object of our contemplation (*cintanīya-viṣaya*).

Question 227—How will we attain auspiciousness?

Answer—Śrī Gaurasundara, along with His associates (*parikaras*), is most worshipable (*pūjya*) for us. It is not possible to worship Bhagavān and leave aside His devotees. There is no means of auspiciousness for living entities other than serving a spiritual master (*guru*) and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). Living entities will not achieve auspiciousness by imitating a *guru* or Vaiṣṇavas; rather, they must follow in their footsteps (*anusaraṇa*). Only then will they attain auspiciousness. It is inappropriate for living entities to imitate (*anukaraṇa*) the activities of Lord Kṛṣṇa; so many *apa-sampradāyas* (unauthorized philosophical schools), such as Āula and Bāula, have manifested due to the obstinate resolve to imitate Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Call out to Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa. This is the only instruction of Gaurasundara; He did not give any other. Thus, Vaiṣṇavas have no other duty. Only chanting of the holy name (*nāma-grahaṇa*) brings auspiciousness. Unfortunately, we do not like *nāma-saṅkīrtana*, congregational chanting of *śrī-hari-nāma* as demonstrated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu

and the other members of *Pañca-tattva*, so how will we attain auspiciousness?

Question 228—Who is a spiritual master?

Answer—Although a spiritual master (Gurudeva) is Bhagavān, he is also a most beloved (*priyatama*) associate of Bhagavān. Associating with Śrī Gurudeva is more beneficial and suitable for us than associating with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Gaurasundara is the spiritual master (*guru*) of all spiritual masters. He said that while a spiritual master is non-different from Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *guru-tattva* (principle of *guru*) manifests in the form of the primary principle (*pradhāna-tattva*) or leader of devotees (*bhaktas*) of Bhagavān. Śrī Gurudeva is most dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he is the best (*sarva-śreṣṭha*) among devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). He is the topmost servant and king of all devotees. He is *bhagavān-sevā-vigraha* (personification of service to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa) and *āśraya-vigraha* (receptacle of love for Kṛṣṇa). He is not *viṣaya-vigraha* (object of love) or *bhoktā-tattva* (Supreme Enjoyer), which apply only to Kṛṣṇa.

Question 229—Who can bestow Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān is *akhaṇḍa-vastu*, undivided substance. Living entities (*jīvas*) attain auspiciousness by following in the footsteps of those who always serve Bhagavān. *Viṣnu-sevā*, service to Lord Viṣṇu, is attained only through service to a spiritual master who is a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇava-*guru*). Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself is the property of Śrī Gurudeva. Lord Kṛṣṇa may partially give Himself to a devotee, whereas His devotees can give Him completely to anyone. There is no loss to Bhagavān in this.

Question 230—Are Vaiṣṇavas selfless, devoid of material possessions, and free from material desires (*akiñcana*)?

Answer—Certainly. Vaiṣṇavas are dependent on Kṛṣṇa; they are His servants. They only have the self-conception (*abhimāna*) of being a servant of Bhagavān; they have no other self-conception. They have no material possessions, and they do not want anything in this world. Nothing in this world can captivate or attract them. Nothing in this world or the next is more attractive than the moon-like toenails of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa. As long as we are not attracted to serving Bhagavān, we should understand that *Mohinī Māyā,* the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa who is a great, bewildering enchantress having many forms, has attacked and captured us.

Question 231—Who are non-devotees?

Answer—Those who always serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead are Vaiṣṇavas, or devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and those who do not serve Him are non-devotees. However, even non-devotees should serve Him.

Non-devotees listen to narrations other than those about the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu. Moreover, they meditate on things other than Lord Viṣṇu. Those who regard consuming tasty food and drinks, and living in a palatial building, to be religion are non-devotees (*avaiṣṇavas*).

Loudly glorifying (*kīrtana*), and hearing (*śravaṇa*) narrations of, the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu is our only, and eternal, duty. It is certainly appropriate for us to stay under guidance of a spiritual master (*guru*) and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). *Viṣṇu-prasādam*, food cooked with love and affection and offered to Lord Viṣṇu, is always suitable for us to accept. If we are busy in other activities and neglect

these services, we should understand that we have become non-devotees. And if we become non-devotees, then we will have to face many kinds of difficulties (*vipattis*) and miseries (*kleśas*). Being averse to Bhagavān is the root cause of all tribulations. We are experiencing distress and misery because we have given up service (*sevā*) to Bhagavān, and we are engaged in other activities. By our free will we have left service to Bhagavān and instead we are endeavoring to ensure that other people serve us. In this way, we are making ourselves look like doers. [While making such efforts, we are being adorned as the doers.] We lack the realization of our constitutional nature (*svarūpa*) that, "I am a servant (*sevaka*) of Bhagavān." Consequently, the following thoughts arise in our mind: "I am the doer (*kartā*)," "I am an enjoyer (*bhoktā*)," "I am the seer (*draṣṭā*)," and "I am an operator (*cālaka*)." All of these bad ideas (*ku-vicāra*) are devouring us. By approaching saintly persons (*sādhus*), we can understand that, "I am not the doer (*kartā*). I am not the object of anyone's service (*sevya*); rather, I am a servant of Bhagavān. Bhagavān is the only object of my service." Those who wander on the path of worldly action (*karma-mārga*) are indeed false [or so-called] doers. We perform virtuous deeds (*sat-karma*) because we want to be loved by everyone in the world. We are busy executing materialistic, worldly duties (*sāṁsārika-kartavyas*) to the best of our ability in order to attract love and affection from near and dear friends and relatives. We will never attain auspiciousness or peace by this; moreover, we will not attain liberation (*mukti*) from the material world and worldly dealings (*saṁsāra*) by this. That is why devotees of Bhagavān mercifully tell us that service to Bhagavān is our only duty (*kartavya*). Service to Bhagavān is the designated duty not just for human beings (*manuṣyas*), but also for demigods (*devatās*), animals (*paśus*), and birds (*pakṣīs*). Unfortunately, we

do not heed the words of devotees, and we think: “If I become a rock, I should act like a rock. If I become a tree, I should give fruit. If I become a father, my duty is to maintain and protect sons and daughters, arrange for their education, and teach them reading and writing.” As human beings, we have so many duties such as getting educated, being civilized, reforming society, and ensuring that our nation makes progress. We make innumerable resolutions, such as: “I will stay at home,” “I will strive to be a doer (*kartā*) so that people respect me,” “I will ride in my car,” and “I will arrange weddings for my sons and daughters.” This is non-devotional mentality (*avaiṣṇavatā*) or averseness to Bhagavān, by which one is a slave of *māyā*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 232—What is the relationship between the object of love (*viṣaya*) and the receptacle of love (*āśraya*)?

Answer—Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only object of love; everyone else is the receptacle of love. *Āśraya* is not separate or different from *viṣaya*; they are related as the One who is served and the servitor (*sevya-sevaka*). *Viṣaya* is only one, while *āśraya* or *āśrita* (those who take shelter) are many. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself is that incomparable *viṣaya* (*advitīya-viṣaya* or *viṣaya-vigraha*). While there are many *āśrayas*, the five original *āśraya-tattvas* or *āśraya-vigrahas* are: (1) Śrī Vārṣabhānavī or Śrī Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Rādhājī in *madhura-rasa* (conjugal love); (2) Śrī Nanda-Yaśodā in *vātsalya-rasa* (parental mood); (3) Śrī Subala and other cowherd friends of Lord Kṛṣṇa in *sakhya-rasa* (friendship); (4) Raktaka and others in *dāsya-rasa* (mood of a servant); and (5) the cows (*go*), herding sticks (*vetra*), flutes (*veṇu*), and other objects in *śānta-rasa* (love in neutrality or awe and reverence). Other *āśrayas* or *āśrita-gaṇa* serve Lord Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of one of these original five *āśraya-tattvas*. Those who do not have the opportunity to

waste time in matters of the material world are the ones who can understand the essence of all of these things. [Only those who have no time to discuss topics of the material world can understand these secret things.]

In our present condition, we cannot understand the truth (*tattva*) about Śrī Rādhā, who is the embodiment of Kṛṣṇa's intimate love and affection or *praṇaya* (*kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-mūrti*). Śrī Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Rādhā is *āśraya-jātīyakṛṣṇa-vastu*, the abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa's love. The variety in the spiritual pastimes (*cid-vilāsa-camatkāritā*) is most complete in the transcendental abode (*āprākṛta-dhāma*) of Śrī Goloka Vṛndāvana. Śrī Rādhikā has the foremost (*sarva-śreṣṭha*) position there. She can climb on Lord Kṛṣṇa's chest to serve Him, and She can even chastise and rebuke Him as part of Her service. Only those who have attained greed to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa can realize the secrets (*marma*) of these topics in their pure heart.

Question 233—What religious principles are beneficial for everyone?

Answer—Currently, when anyone serves his religion or country, he is given a great deal of respect by the people of the world. They glorify such activities as adherence to religion (*dharma*) and service to country (*deśa-sevā*). However, all such activities are non-devotional in nature, and they are actually based on aversion to Bhagavān. Non-devotional endeavors are based on *karma* (reward-seeking or pious activities), *jñāna* (knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), and *yoga* (developing mystic powers). Such endeavors represent activities of a disciplic succession of atheists (*nāstika-sampradāya*); they arise from the mundane senses and they are only meant for acquiring sense satisfaction (*bhoga*). There is not even a trace of service to Bhagavān in these endeavors.

In the *Bhagavad-gītā* verse ***sarva dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja,*** Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa advises us to give up all worldly religious activities (*dharmas*). He tells us to accept the *dharma* of taking shelter of Him. People in atheistic disciplic successions are averse to Bhagavān. They transgress this direct order and instruction of Bhagavān to surrender to Him. They fabricate their own opinions and ideas, and they call their bogus philosophy *sarva-dharma samanvaya*, which means reconciling all religions. In this way, they get cheated themselves and are also cheating others. Even if the whole world accept this bogus philosophy as truth, even then it is actually very far from truth (*vāstava-vastu*). One who is devoid of Kṛṣṇa consciousness may endeavor to acquire knowledge by sense perception. However, such endeavors cannot be regarded as *parama-dharma* (topmost religion) or *sanātana-dharma* (eternal religion). Lord Hari is the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is Adhokṣaja, meaning that He is beyond material sense perception and not perceivable by impure material senses. Rendering uninterrupted devotional service (*bhakti*) to Him without any expectation of reward is the topmost religious duty of every living entity. This is the only religious principle that is beneficial for everyone (*sarva-janīna dharma*). It is the natural devotional inclination of the soul (*ātma-dharma*); it is our eternal nature (*nitya-dharma*); and it is the eternal religious principle (*sanātana-dharma*). The *Padma-purāṇa* states:

ārādhanānāṁ sarveṣāṁ viṣṇor ārādhanaṁ param
tasmāt parataraṁ devi tadīyānāṁ samarcanam

Among all types of devotional service or worship (*ārādhanās*) that are present on Earth, worship of Lord Viṣṇu is superior. Worship of devotees of Lord Viṣṇu is superior to worship of Lord Viṣṇu Himself. Worship of the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja, Śrīmatī Rādhā-rāṇī, is superior to worship

of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Even worship of Nanda and Yaśodā is superior to worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Worship of Śrīdāma and Sudāma is superior to worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Worship of Raktaka and Patraka is superior to worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 234—What kind of dedication should one have for the lotus feet of a spiritual master?

Answer—Real disciples know the lotus feet of a spiritual master (Śrī Guru-pāda-padma) to be the Supreme Personality of Servitorship (*sevaka-bhagavān*), who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*). They do not regard a spiritual master as being even slightly less than Bhagavān in any aspect. Devotees who are free from duplicity perform devotional service to a spiritual master (*guru*) just like they do for Bhagavān; they worship and serve him like Bhagavān. Disciples who cannot serve their spiritual master fall down from their position. It is not possible for one who does not see a spiritual master to be an expansion and non-different manifestation of Bhagavān to chant the pure holy name.

"I will serve my spiritual master (Śrī Guru) and Gaurāṅga under his guidance in a straightforward, simple-hearted manner. The words and orders of Bhagavān are given by my spiritual master, and I will follow them properly. I will not disobey my spiritual master by believing the divergent views of anyone else on Earth. If I have to become a hypocrite (*dāmbhika*); if I have to become an animal; or even if I have to go to hell for eternity to follow the order of my spiritual master, I am ready for that. I will not listen to anything other than the order of my spiritual master. I will abandon the mentality (*cintā-dhārā*) of other living entities of the world with a punch of my fist by the strength of the lotus feet of my spiritual master. Billions of people can be delivered by one particle of his foot-dust. [Śrīla Gurudeva's holy feet are

comparable to a lotus, and a particle of his foot-dust is comparable to pollen. This pollen-like particle of his foot-dust can deliver billions of people.] There is no scholar in the world or good instructions in the fourteen planetary systems heavier (more meaningful) than even one particle of the foot-dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva, a holy spiritual master." A real disciple should have this strong faith and determination.

Question 235—What type of consciousness (*citta-vṛtti*) should we practitioners (*sādhaka*s) have?

Answer—Practitioners should understand that unwanted habits (*anarthas*) are present in the stage prior to attaining the goal of life (*artha*). The reason is that during the time when sense objects are unfavorable for devotional service, they can give birth to favorable devotional service in the next moment. In reality, all of the things of the material world are instruments for serving Lord Kṛṣṇa; when such good intelligence (*subuddhi*) awakens, desire for sense gratification (*bhoga-buddhi*) cannot shake a living entity from his vow to execute devotional service. It is our duty to happily accept whatever brings happiness to Lord Kṛṣṇa. If taking away my happiness and material possessions, and bringing adversity into my life, makes Lord Kṛṣṇa happy, I should certainly accept this. Such dependence on Bhagavān will certainly protect us. When one hears and sings the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, all unwanted habits gradually vanish automatically. Following in the footsteps of the lotus feet of a spiritual master (Śrī Guru-pāda-padma), who is an eternally perfected great personality (*nitya-siddha mahājana*), is the only bridge to cross the ocean of repeated birth and death. By firmly understanding this, we will definitely advance on the path of devotional service (*bhakti-mārga*).

Question 236—Who can bestow Lord Kṛṣṇa upon us?

Answer—Lord Kṛṣṇa is not an object of this world. Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of the whole world (*jagadīśvara*); Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*parama-puruṣa*); Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord (*parameśvara*); Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Truth (*parama-satya*); Kṛṣṇa is *vāstava-vastu* (truly-abiding substance grounded in transcendence); and Kṛṣṇa is the only object of worship (*ekamātra-upāsya*). No person from this material world can bestow upon us Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is *māyā-adhīśa,* the controller of the illusory potency *māyā*. Kṛṣṇa alone is the wealth of a devotee. Therefore, only a devotee can bestow Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa manifests in the pure heart of a person who is inclined to render devotional service (*sevā-unmukha*).

Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa distribute Him from door to door at every house in every locality; this is their mercy. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are merciful to living entities, and they directly distribute the holy name of Kṛṣṇa by visiting each door in their locality. The most merciful Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu also distributed everywhere the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-nāma*), which is the only object of worship (*upāsya-vastu*) for living entities, and the only real substance (*vāstava-vastu*). If by good fortune we take shelter of a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa and surrender at his lotus feet without duplicity, certainly he can bestow Kṛṣṇa upon us.

Question 237—What instruction does a spiritual master (*sad-guru*) give?

Answer—There is no lack of advisers and instructors in this world. Many people say that first we should especially apply our mind to the requirements of this material world. However, doing so is opposed to our best interest; our needs will only increase. We have many needs in life, and trying to meet all of the

usual needs will drown us in many problems and difficulties.

We can reside in this world with great attachment, or we can display great renunciation by becoming totally detached. However, neither of these two attitudes will bring any auspiciousness to us. Many thugs in this material world have disguised themselves in the dress of a *sādhu* (saintly person). They are busy motivating other living entities to seek mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*). To get out of the clutches of such thugs, it is necessary for us to be clever, and in order to be clever, we have to engage our mind in contemplating and meditating on the instructions of Śrī Caitanya-deva.

Bṛahaspati, the *guru* of the demigods, gives advice to them so that they will be inclined towards sense gratification (*bhoga*). The intention of Bṛhaspati's intelligence and religious instructions is to increase their sense gratification (*bhoga-vṛddhi*). Many good advisors are present among people. However, whatever guidance and instruction is given from family preceptors (*kula-purohita*), leaders of society (*samāja-pati*), leaders of countries (*deśa-pati*), and friends and relatives (*ātmīya-svajana*) is only for increasing sense gratification of human beings (*mānava-jāti*). Family preceptors like Vaśiṣṭha advise about a life of detachment and renunciation (*nivṛtta-jīvana*). On the other hand, a bona fide spiritual master, who is a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇava *sad-guru*), gives us advice and instruction about engaging in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*). Neither engagement in sense gratification (*pravṛtti*) nor detachment from sense objects (*nivṛtti*) is the ultimate goal of his instruction. He is an instructor who guides us on the path of everlasting auspiciousness.

Question 238—How will lust go away?

Answer—Only inclination and eagerness to serve Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevonmukhatā*) can save us from the propensity to engage in sense gratification (*bhoga-unmukhatā*). *Kāma* (lust) means being averse or unwilling to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā-vimukhatā*). It is the duty of an incomplete portion (*apūrṇa-aṁśa*) to serve the complete substance (*pūrṇa-vastu*). Serving a *niṣkāma kṛṣṇa-bhakta* (devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa who is devoid of material desires) is the only medicine to protect one from the clutches of lust. Only servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa can deliver us from activities that are opposed to devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*).

Without the inclination to serve Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the transcendental Cupid (*aprākṛta-kāmadeva*), we develop attraction to mundane cupid (*prākṛta-kāmadeva*). The eternal function (*nitya-vṛtti*) of a living entity, who is a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-dāsa*), is to satisfy the senses of transcendental Cupid; this is Vaiṣṇava etiquette. Attaining Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prāpti*) or service to Him (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) destroys the seed of *kāma*, or desire for sense gratification.

Question 239—What do devotees regard as obstacles?

Answer—Those who regard worldly scarcity (*jāgatika-abhāva*), worldly difficulty (*asuvidhā*), and the threefold miseries (*tri-tāpa*) to be obstacles desire mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), and liberation (*mokṣa*). Sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*) who desire sense gratification (*bubhukṣu*), and renunciates (*tyāgīs*) who desire liberation (*mumukṣu*), regard failure to fulfill their misplaced selfish interest (*apa-svārtha*) to be a calamity (*vipada*). In contrast, devotees of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa regard obstacles (*bādhā*) to serving Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*), or to satisfying His senses (*kṛṣṇendriya-*

tarpaṇa), to be a calamity. Our endeavors for *dharma, artha, kāma* (sense gratification) and *mokṣa* (liberation) pose obstacles in satisfying the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa; therefore, devotees (*bhakta-jana*) want freedom from those obstacles. In other words, devotees of Bhagavān want to become free from both the desire for sense gratification (*bhoga-vāñchā*) and the desire for liberation (*mokṣa-vāñchā*).

Question 240—Is there a particular need to be straightforward and simple-hearted in our dealings with others (*saralatā*)?

Answer—We have to be straightforward and simple-hearted by nature. We will have to give up hypocrisy, crookedness, and fault-finding (*para-carcā*). It is incorrect to consider foolishness (*buddhi-hīnatā*) or crookedness (*kūṭilatā*) to be sincerity and straightforwardness (*saralatā*). True sincerity cannot be the same as seeming sincerity, just as true punctuality (being on-time) cannot be the same as seeming punctuality. The thoughts of saintly persons (*sādhus*) and nondevotees (*asādhus*) cannot be the same. If we do not remain engaged in discussing pastimes of Bhagavān twenty-four–hours-a-day, it means that we are taking a vacation from devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*).

Question 241—Should we personally perform devotional service (*sevā*)?

Answer—Every one of us will have to become a servant of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is beyond the perception of the mundane senses (Adhokṣaja Bhagavān). The activities of devotional service cannot be performed through a priest (*purohita*) or representative (*pratinidhi*). In some *sampradāyas* (disciplic successions), one person is a spokesman who performs worship, and another person just stands there watching. This cannot be called *sevā*. We will have to engage in devotional

service as a follower of an *ācārya* (spiritual preceptor who teaches by personal example). We attain auspiciousness by engaging in *sādhu-saṅga* (association with saintly persons), *nāma-kīrtana* (loud singing of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa), *hari-kathā śravaṇa* (listening to narrations of the holy names, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates), and *śrī-mūrti-pūjā* (worship of the Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa). One cannot attain auspiciousness by imitating or faking these activities, or by enacting a superficial drama. If we do not have full dedication and we only imitate devotional activities, this is only a dramatic performance (*abhinaya*).

Whatever wealth that we attain by the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa should be used in His service. We will experience difficulties if we accumulate money while being miserly and lax in devotional service.

Many people tell me that I should make some permanent arrangement for the administration and financial management of monasteries (*maṭha*s) and temples (*mandiras*). However, I will not do anything like this. If one's life is truly dedicated to serving the Lord, and if one is surrendered in the true sense, service to the Deities will go on nicely by the mercy of Bhagavān. Moreover, the words of Mahāprabhu will be preached without fear. Otherwise, everything will go to hell.

We will have to maintain a keen vision towards auspiciousness for ourselves and others (*sva-para-maṅgala*). We will not stay in this world for a long time. Our life will be successful if we give up our body while rendering service to Lord Hari (*hari-sevā*) and performing loud glorification of the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Hari (*hari-kīrtana*). We have not come to this world to become artisans, construction workers, or supervisors who work with wood and stone. We are only carriers (peons) of the words of Śrī Caitanyadeva.

Question 242—Is it a misconception to regard serving a household (*gṛha-sevā*) as serving Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevā*)?

Answer—Certainly.A house which is a place of sense gratification (*bhoga-āgāra-gṛha*) and a monastery (*maṭha*) which is full of the mood of service to Lord Hari (*hari-sevā-maya-maṭha*) are not the same; service to a household cannot be called service to Bhagavān. *Gṛha-vrata-buddhi* (mood of attachment to a household) and *hari-sevā-pravṛtti* (propensity to be attached to serving Lord Hari) are different. For one who is able to render devotional service to Lord Hari, a monastery and a household or home (*gṛha*) are the same. For one who is unable to do devotional service, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*māyā*) and bewilderment (*moha*) will be at both places, causing further obstacles to *hari-bhajana.*

One cannot expect auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) if one regards *gṛha-sevā* to be *hari-sevā*. *Hari-sevā* is never possible if there is love and mood of service (*sevā-buddhi*) towards things or personalities who are not connected to our soul or real self (*anātmīya-vastu*), such as father, mother, husband, wife, and child. If we get bound in that love and affection, attachment to relatives and friends (*svajana-sneha*) will make them the objects of our devotional service (*bhajanīya*). One is guaranteed to be trapped in the cycle of material existence (*saṁsāra*) and attain inauspiciousness if one's sense of discrimination (*viveka*) regarding who is really a parent or child is lacking. Even after one receives spiritual initiation (*dīkṣā*), if one associates, with attachment, with a country of one's origin or family member such as one's father, son, wife, or mother who is averse to Hari, and if service to such a country or person appears to one to be *bhagavat-sevā*, it should be understood that one has forgotten pure *hari-bhajana*. It is necessary for one to associate with a 'Living

Source' (living saintly person) for some time in order to overcome delusion (*bhrānti*) and restlessness of the heart (*citta-caṅcalatā*). Otherwise, disastrous things such as attachment to friends and relatives (*svajana-āsakti*), attachment to children (*putra-sneha-pāśa*), or attachment to the happiness of being with a spouse or partner (*patnī-sahavāsa-sukha*) will forever separate us from *hari-bhajana*, and the material world (*saṁsāra*) will be worthy of our craving (*ākāṅkṣā*). Due to the influence of bad association (*asat-saṅga*), we mistake serving a household to be serving Lord Hari. In order to become free from this entanglement, it is absolutely essential to associate with devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa and hear about the scriptures (*śāstra*).

Question 243—What is the speciality in God, Allah and Krishna?

Answer—The word God has got a very limited idea. We find the perfect and highest conception of theism in Krishna only. The word Allah means the greatest i.e. Possessor of a partial quality. It is an adjective. But Krishna is the source of all powers. He is the proper noun.

Question 244—What does a holy spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva) bestow on a person under his shelter (*āśrita-jana*)?

Answer—Śrī Gurudeva bestows *vaikuṇṭha-nāma*, the transcendental holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is also known as Vaikuṇṭha, on a devotee who has taken his shelter. Śrī Gurudeva is a non-different manifestation (*abhinna-mūrti*) of Bhagavān, and he is also the embodiment of His servant (*sevaka-vigraha*). Therefore, one must not disregard him by considering him to be an ordinary human being; such disregard is a great offense. The transcendental sound vibration (*śabda*) of Vaikuṇṭha (*Vaikuṇṭha-śabda*) is non-different from Bhagavān, who is *Vaikuṇṭha-śabdī*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is addressed

by that sound vibration. The holy name (*nāma*) is Kṛṣṇa Himself; there is no difference between *nāma* and *nāmī*, the Person addressed by the holy name. *Vaikuṇṭha-nāma* is not a substance of this material world. *Vaikuṇṭha-nāma* is not an object that can be seen by worldly eyes (*dṛśya-vastu*); He is Himself the seer (*draṣṭā*).

Only a bona fide spiritual master, who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha sad-guru*), can bestow Lord Kṛṣṇa. One may get the good opportunity to listen to *kṛṣṇa-kathā* (narrations of pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa) from a spiritual master who is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*vaiṣṇava-guru*). No one other than a devotee (*bhakta*) can properly narrate such pastimes. If we approach a teacher who is a *karmī* (one engaged in *karma*; a materialist), *jñānī* (one who cultivates knowledge), *yogī* (one practicing *yoga* to realize Paramātmā or Supersoul, or to merge into the Lord’s personal body), or worldly teacher (*jāgatika-adhyāpaka*), we will only hear about *māyā*, Kṛṣṇa's energy which deludes living entities into forgetfulness of the Supreme Lord. Such people do not accept the eternal existence (*nitya-astitva*) of Bhagavān Viṣṇu, and they also do not agree that His transcendental form (*vigraha*) consists of eternity, knowledge, and bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda*). They regard incarnations of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-avatāra*) and spiritual masters (*ācāryadeva*) to be mere mortals and ordinary human beings.

Śrī Gurudeva bestows *kṛṣṇa-nāma* (holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and *kṛṣṇa-mantra* (holy *mantra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa) upon his disciple (*śiṣya*) who is his follower (*anugata-jana*). As long as we regard a spiritual master to be an ordinary mortal, we will not be able to understand narrations (*kathā*) about the holy name of Lord Hari (*hari-nāma*), or the glories (*mahimā*) of *hari-nāma*. One will not attain auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) for all eternity if one regards Śrī Caitanyadeva to be a human being (*manuṣya*). One gets connected with

Vraja-dhāma (holy abode of Vraja or Braja) and Śrī Gaurasundara by the mercy of a spiritual master (*śrī guru-kṛpā*).

The holy *mantra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa is most exalted; there is nothing more exalted and powerful than *kṛṣṇa-mantra*. When one attains perfection in chanting *kṛṣṇa-mantra*, all varieties of mental speculation (*mano-dharma*) cease.

The eternal confidential grove (*nitya-kuñja*) of Śrī Gurudeva is on the shore of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa. There, he has bound Kṛṣṇa by his service (*sevā*). One can attain *giri-vara* (best of mountains) Govardhana only by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva. Kṛṣṇa Himself is present in another form (*mūrti*) as Govardhana. One who has the propensity to engage in mental concoction and speculation sees Govardhana as stone. The place where Śrīmatī Vārṣabhānavī (Vṛṣa-bhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā) performs pastimes is not made of the dirt and mud of the material world; it is adorned with transcendental gemstones (*maṇi-maya*). By Śrī Gurudeva's mercy, we receive hope for attaining internal, confidential service to Śrī Śrī Rādhā Mādhava.

When we get the mercy of a spiritual master, all of our inauspiciousness is eliminated, and we attain all manner of auspiciousness. One cannot know Lord Kṛṣṇa through ordinary religious principles (*dharma*) or worldly measuring. One can know Him only by exclusive, unalloyed devotional service (*kevalā-bhakti*), which is attained only by the mercy of a holy spiritual master, who is the best among devotees.

Only narrations of pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-kathā*) are valuable. Such narrations are the only necessary food (*pātheya*) or money (*sambala*) that we need for our spiritual journey; they are directly Kṛṣṇa Himself. [Note: when we set out on a journey, we carry food that does not easily spoil due to heat. Such food that we take to be eaten during a journey

is called *pātheya*. Examples of *pātheya* are puffed rice, jaggery, and Indian bread.] Only *kṛṣṇa-kathā* is invaluable; in comparison, all other types of narrations do not even have the value of a broken piece of conch-shell (*phūṭī-kauḍī*). Therefore, it is necessary to preach about Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes far and wide in the world. We get the good opportunity to hear *kṛṣṇa-kathā* only from the mouth of Śrī Gurudeva, who is a resident of Vraja.

Presently, we have abandoned *kṛṣṇa-kathā*, and we are spending every day worrying about this material body, which is just a bag of bones and flesh. That is why we are interacting with material objects, and why we are not realizing the soul (*ātmā*).

Question 245—Who can understand the activities of devotees?

Answer—Those who sincerely follow the conduct and teachings of devotees of the Lord, whose character is unfathomable (who are very difficult to understand), can comprehend their activities by their grace. One cannot comprehend devotees of Bhagavān by any other means. One cannot understand the character (*caritra*) of Vaiṣṇavas through knowledge acquired by the material senses (*indriyaja-jñāna*). Devotees cannot always be fully understood from their external actions. Only if by great fortune (*saubhāgya*) we become inclined to render service, and we get a wonderful opportunity (*suyoga*) to observe the character of a devotee, will we attain auspiciousness (*maṅgala*). The tendency (*dharma*) to measure everything by knowledge acquired through sense perception (*akṣaja-jñāna*) puts living entities into difficulty.

Question 246—Should we discuss the teachings of Śrī Gurudeva every day?

Answer—Śrī Gurudeva is the best (*sarva-śreṣṭha*) among Vaiṣṇavas. One must daily listen to

his teachings and instructions; he is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*). We invite severe distress if we do not discuss and listen to his teachings daily, and instead engage in other activities. It is inappropriate to imitate a spiritual master (*gurudeva*) or Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa), or to associate with non-devotees; we should follow in the footsteps of *gurudeva* and Vaiṣṇavas. We should associate only with those in whose heart Bhagavān resides. Devotees (*bhaktas*) and non-devotees (*abhaktas*), liberated personalities (*muktas*) and conditioned souls (*baddhas*), and perfected personalities (*siddhas*) and imperfect personalities (*asiddhas*) are not the same. Rice that is uncooked (*asiddha*) cannot be digested and is therefore not fit to be eaten. When rice is properly cooked (*siddha*) and cooled down sufficiently, it is fit for human consumption. Similarly, company of perfected devotees (*siddha-bhaktas*) is most essential and auspicious. [**Note:** the word *siddha* has two meanings: (1) cooked and (2) perfected. Śrīla Prabhupāda is giving us a good example or analogy to indicate that just as *siddha* (cooked) rice is fit to be eaten, associating with *siddha* (perfected) devotees is most beneficial for *sādhaka*s.]

Question 247—Why is Śrī Gurudeva addressed as Prabhupāda or Viṣṇupāda?

Answer—Śrī Gurudeva, who knows *kṛṣṇa-tattva* (Supreme Truth about Lord Kṛṣṇa), is *āśraya-vigraha*, the shelter or receptacle of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. For disciples (*śiṣyas*), he is a direct manifestation (*svarūpa*) of Kṛṣṇa-caitanya or Hari. Therefore, he is addressed as *viṣṇu-pāda* or *prabhu-pāda.*

Question 248—Who will have everlasting auspiciousness?

Answer—Service to a spiritual master and

devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) is permanent and results in eternal auspiciousness. In contrast, benefits are short-lived if one thinks, “I got a great benefit today because I dedicated myself to the pursuit of sense gratification or renunciation.”

We can serve Lord Viṣṇu only by serving a spiritual master (*guru*) and Vaiṣṇavas. I have become a staunch sense enjoyer due to my past bad activities; only by the mercy of a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas can I understand that sense gratification (*bhoga*) and renunciation (*tyāga*) are not the constitutional functions of the soul (*ātma-dharma*), but are functions of the fickle material mind (*manodharma*). It is true that I am unfit and incapable. However, I can become fit and qualified if I serve a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas; there is no other way to become qualified and attain auspiciousness. In the beginning, we cannot know how to serve Lord Viṣṇu. By comparative study (*tāratamya*), we can understand that serving devotees of Lord Viṣṇu (*viṣṇu-bhaktas*) is greater in every way than serving Lord Viṣṇu. Some staunch devotees keep on serving Lord Viṣṇu although they are unable to find Him in this world. I understand how to render service by rendering service to such staunch devotees.

One should not become hopeless because it is not possible to know about service to Bhagavān through knowledge acquired by one's material senses (*indriyaja-jñana*). Bhagavān is *adhokṣaja-vastu*, the Lord who is beyond the cognition and perception of material senses. Those who serve *adhokṣaja-vastu* are also *adhokṣaja-vastu*. Therefore, for them, service to *adhokṣaja* is not *ajñeya* (unknowable), *durjñeya* (difficult to understand), or *parokṣa* (out of sight). *Adhokṣaja-sevā* (service to the Supreme Lord) and *sevā* to servants of Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevakas*) are direct activities (*pratyakṣa-viṣaya*) of the fully-blossomed soul (*prasphuṭita-ātmā*).

Question 249—What is *karma* (fruitive activity)?

Answer—Endeavors for comfort and happiness for oneself and others is known as *karma*. In such fruitive activities there is no question of seeking happiness for Lord Kṛṣṇa. The goal of fruitive activities is to arrange for happiness for oneself and others. Activities meant for Lord Kṛṣṇa's happiness (*kṛṣṇa-sukha-anusandhāna*) are devotional service (*bhakti*).

For ordinary people, this world (*saṁsāra*) is a field of *karma* (*karma-kṣetra*). In contrast, for devotees (*bhaktas*), this world is a place for practicing devotional service (*bhakti-sādhana-kṣetra*). Activities done in the material world with the mood of being a doer or possessor (*kartṛtva-abhimāna*) are *karma*. One should have the self-conception of being a servant of one's spiritual master (*guru*) and Lord Kṛṣṇa; in such Kṛṣṇa consciousness, whatever activities are done to please Bhagavān are *bhakti*.

Regarding for how long we should remain involved in *karma*, the scriptures state:

tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate

As long as one does not develop detachment (*virakti*) and aversion (*nirveda*) towards*karma*, one will continue to engage in *karma*. Fortunately, if one develops faith and interest in *bhagavat-kathā* (topics related to the Supreme Lord and His associates) as a result of *sādhu-saṅga*, one will be freed from *karma*. As long as one does not develop either of these two characteristics (*lakṣaṇas*) namely (1) *virakti* and *nirveda* towards *karma*, or (2) faith and interest in *bhagavat-kathā,* one will certainly have to act in the field of the material world (*saṁsāra*-*kṣetra*).

Faith (*śraddhā*) and interest or taste (*ruci*) in *hari-kathā* is the root cause of *bhakti*, and the characteristic of such faith and interest is the firm conviction (*viśvāsa*) that *hari-kathā* is the only means

of attaining auspiciousness. The primary duty of every devotee is to perform devotional activities for which he has the strongest faith and taste. For this to be successful, it is very important for one to associate with a highly-qualified saintly person (*sādhu*); there is no other way to develop the inclination to render devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and to give up the propensity to engage in *karma* and sense gratification (*bhoga*).

We should not become distracted (*vyasta*), restless (*cañcala*), or hopeless (*hatāśa*); rather, we should hear powerful *hari-kathā* from a living source (devotee). We should follow the instructions received from a living source to the best of our ability; this is a sign of intelligence (*buddhimattā*) and cleverness (*cāturya*). The scriptures state:

tato duḥsaṅgam utsṛjya
satsu sajjeta buddhimān
santa evāsya cchindanti
mano-vyāsaṅgam uktibhiḥ

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.26.26)

That is, a wise person should give up bad association and take good association. Saintly persons cut attachments of the mind through their words of transcendental wisdom.

sādhu-saṅga-kṛpā kimvā kṛṣṇera kṛpāya
kāmādi duḥsaṅga chāḍi śuddha-bhakti pāya

In other words, by the grace (*kṛpā*) of *sādhu-saṅga* and Lord Kṛṣṇa, one gives up bad association and the quest for sense gratification, and attains pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*).

Question 250—How can we perform continual, uninterrupted devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*)?

Answer—If we associate with a living ideal, great personality (*jīvanta-ādarśa mahā-puruṣa*) who is always engaged in devotional service (*bhajana*), we will have the great fortune (*saubhāgya*) to also

always be engaged in devotional service to Lord Hari by his mercy.

The scriptures state:

nijābhīṣṭa kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha pāche ta' lāgiyā
nirantara kṛṣṇa bhaje antarmanā haiyā

Meaning: One who desires to perform devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) must continuously render devotional service to Him by following in the footsteps of personalities who are very dear to Him, and by always being introspective.

Mahājanas (great personalities) have sung:

kṛṣṇa se tomāra, kṛṣṇa dite pāra,
tomāra śakati āche
āmi ta' kāṅgāla, 'kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa' bali',
dhāi tava pāche pāche

Meaning: O Vaiṣṇava Ṭhākura! Kṛṣṇa belongs to you. You possess the power to bestow Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although I am a penniless beggar devoid of the real wealth of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*), with hope and eagerness to attain Lord Kṛṣṇa, I am running behind a *mahā-bhāgavata* (great devotee) like you, calling out 'Kṛṣṇa-Kṛṣṇa'.

Question 251—Should we continuously perform *hari-kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Hari)?

Answer—Certainly. Mahāprabhu gave us the following instruction: *kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ*—"Always perform loud *kīrtana* of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa." The word *sadā* (always) means that our *kīrtana* should not be interrupted for even a moment. Every human being has no work other than loudly glorifying Lord Hari. We should perform *hari-kīrtana* even for animals and birds, and if ignorant people call us crazy (*unmatta*) or stupid, there is no loss for us. Keeping the order of Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga on our head, we will constantly perform *kīrtana* of narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes. People in the material world read newspapers daily to find out

about mundane topics and gossip (*grāmya-vārtā*). They are always surrounded by an environment of mundane talks. We say that everyone should daily hear about the pastimes of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu (*caitanya-kathā*). Whenever we meet we should discuss those pastimes; our very breath should be used only to glorify them. If everyone does so, this world will become devoid of materialistic gossip (*acaitanya-kathā*), and there will only be *caitanya-kathā*.

In order to keep alive our spirit of adherence to the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, we will always have to listen to His pastimes and teachings. Today, many people opposed to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are creating obstacles to *hari-kathā-kīrtana*. Despite such obstacles, we are using a great deal of financial resources to arrange for continuous, uninterrupted *hari-kathā-kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes). This material world is devoid of adherence to the teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is afflicted by the disease of unwanted habits (*anartha-roga*), and it is pervaded by intoxication and lack of Kṛṣṇa consciousness (*acetanā*); people will not take the medicine of auspiciousness (*maṅgala*). They engage in many activities, but they will not listen to *caitanya-kathā* (pastimes and teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu); they waste their vital resources including life, wealth, and intelligence listening to *acaitanya-kathā* (narrations not related to Lord Caitanya and Lord Kṛṣṇa). Thus, they invite their own inauspiciousness. They allow their disease to worsen through unrestricted indulgence, like a patient who repeatedly eats forbidden food, and finally they go to hell. They would achieve a great deal of auspiciousness and eliminate many difficulties if only they would listen to some *caitanya-kathā* daily. Unfortunately, they are not at all interested in that auspiciousness and facility; it seems that they have

taken a solemn vow to avoid them. Nevertheless, devotees of Lord Caitanya, in an effort to uproot the mountain of obstacles and calamities in the material world, are preaching pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness everywhere by constantly creating publications about the pastimes and teachings of Lord Caitanya (*caitanya-vārtā*), such as the daily newspaper *Nadīyā-prakāśa* (spiritual light of transcendental knowledge emanating from Navadvīpa or Nadīyā).

Question 252—With whom should we associate?

Answer—Our spiritual masters (*guru-varga*) regard *karma* (fruitive activities) and *jñāna* (pursuit of impersonal knowledge) to be the religion (*dharma*) of cheaters. Therefore, we should give up the paths of *karma* and *jñāna*, and only follow the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*). It is essential for us to associate with devotees on that path, especially those who are superior to us. Our only goal and aspiration is the foot-dust of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the founder of the mission, who is entrusted with the solemn responsibility of fulfilling the innermost desire of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. One can attain devotional service (*bhakti*) by associating with devotees (*bhakta-saṅga*). *Karmīs* (fruitive workers), *jñānīs* (speculative philosophers), and *yogīs* (mystics aspiring for supernatural powers) are non-devotees. They cheat themselves and others; therefore, we must give up their association. Associating with any one other than pure devotees (*śuddha-bhaktas*) leads to inauspiciousness.

Question 253—Is there an especial and essential need to be under guidance (*ānugatya*)?

Answer—Certainly. One cannot engage in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) if one has an independent nature; such a person can never be a devotee (*bhakta*). One attains auspiciousness

(*maṅgala*) only if one follows in the footsteps of a spiritual master. Independent persons indeed have various opinions. If the hundred-crore (one billion) cowherd damsels were to have a hundred-crore different opinions, there would be an obstacle in satisfying the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The only way that one can keep Mādhava happy is to follow in the footsteps of Śrī Vṛṣa-bhānu-nandinī. [No one is able to satisfy Mādhava's mind without accepting the guidance of Śrī Vṛṣa-bhānu-nandinī (Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, beloved daughter of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja) and following in Her footsteps.] Śrī Guru-pāda-padma is a confidential, internal personal associate (*antaraṅga-nija-jana*) of Śrī Vṛṣa-bhānu-nandinī, and he is also Her non-different manifestation (*abhinna-mūrti*). Therefore, it is essential for everyone who seeks auspiciousness to follow in the footsteps (*ānugatya*) of a spiritual master; there is no other way to attain auspiciousness.

Question 254—What is the perspective of fruitive workers (*karmīs*), mental speculators (*jñānīs*), and devotees (*bhaktas*)?

Answer—Humans generally do not try to understand anything other than satisfaction of their senses. Fruitive workers think, "My happiness and comfort should come even at the cost of unhappiness and difficulty of hundreds or thousands of others." Mental speculators think, "I should abandon both the happiness (*sukha*) and unhappiness (*asukha*) of this world and adopt impersonalism." Fruitive workers are busy trying to establish the superiority of their power, while mental speculators are satisfied and free from worries (*niścinta*) by thinking that the Supreme Personality of Godhead (Bhagavān), who is actually all-powerful (*sarva-śaktimān*), is devoid of potency (*niḥśaktika*). In both cases, the potency of Bhagavān is not respected or accepted. Therefore, those who

seek auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) do not accept the paths of fruitive action or speculative impersonal knowledge; they only accept the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*). Devotees have only one thing in mind—complete dependence on Bhagavān and making Him happy. They dedicate all of their actions and knowledge to satisfying His senses. Devotional service (*bhakti* or *ekāyana-pantha*) is dedicating everything to Bhagavān. If one follows any other conceptions, this will lead to non-devotion (*abhakti* or *bahvayana-pantha*). *Bahvayana-panthī* are worshipers of many demigods who think that all of them are the Supreme Lords. They maintain such ideas as being correct, but they are incompatible with the principles of devotional service. Wherever consciousness (*citta-vṛtti*) is completely inclined towards serving Bhagavān, there is a saintly mood (*sādhutā*); otherwise, there is only a non-saintly, non-devotional (*asādhutā*) mentality everywhere. Devotees are devoid of material desires (*niṣkāma*). Unlike fruitive workers, mental speculators, and mystics, they do not have even a trace of desire for personal happiness. Devotees are always busy seeking happiness for Lord Kṛṣṇa. They regard themselves as more insignificant than a blade of grass (*tṛṇādapi sunīca*). Their only concern is serving Bhagavān. Devotees (*bhakta-gaṇa*) are fearless (*nirbhaya*), without anxiety (*niścinta*), and happy (*sukhī*). On the other hand, fruitive workers (*karmīs*) and philosophical speculators (*jñānīs*), who are full of material desires, are restless (*aśānta*) and unhappy (*duḥkhī*).

kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma, ata-eva 'śānta'
bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kāmī, sakala-i 'aśānta'

Question 255—Should one try to curb worldly propensities?

Answer—Certainly. If arrangements are not made to prevent worldly tendencies, a living entity

again has to accept birth and subsequent death. Therefore, one needs to stop the movement of the senses. [Hence, controlling sensory indulgences is essential.] If one does not restrict one's senses, worldly propensities will remain and distress will not go away. One must follow the original, authentic source; if one does so, one's material desires will stop. Then one will no longer try to attain the four worldly goals of life—*dharma* (mundane religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification), and *mokṣa* (liberation)—and one will attain topmost auspiciousness.

When Kṛṣṇa manifests in one's heart, one's worldly desires are eliminated. Kṛṣṇa is Kāma-deva (Cupid); all of our desires should be only for His service, and not for anyone else's service. Those who have accepted Kṛṣṇa in their heart are not enjoyers; therefore, they have no desires aimed at their own service.

If we do not follow the ideal devotional lives of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas), our senses will drag us on the wrong path. When on the wrong path, we cannot understand that the master of all of our senses is Kṛṣṇa alone. We received a human body only so that we could engage it in devotional service to Lord Hari. We can cross the ocean of material existence (*bhava-sāgara*) using the boat of this human form, under guidance of a spiritual master as captain, and thus attain the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Is it our duty to allow ourselves to die by drowning in the ocean of material existence instead of accepting arrangements to cross it?

Question 256—How will we achieve auspiciousness?

Answer—The lotus feet of Śrī Gaurasundara (Caitanya Mahāprabhu) are an invaluable treasure. Let the pastimes of Mahāprabhu always be discussed all over Earth. Living entities will attain

auspiciousness if such discussions go on continually. All of the abilities that are beyond humans will become available to them; they will realize and experience a reality that is beyond the perception of mortal human beings. When we contemplate the real truth, we will realize that only the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya-deva are auspicious; narrations of all other pastimes lead to inauspiciousness.

Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa-candra said, ***ahaṁ tvāṁ sarva-pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi***—"I shall protect you from all sins," and ***māmeva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te***—"Those who take exclusive shelter of Me can easily transcend this *māyā*." In making such statements, He is giving us assurance in so many ways. How many good opportunities He gives us! He tells us that we will attain auspiciousness if we take shelter of Him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains that He shares the responsibility of bringing auspiciousness to all. However, do we believe Him? That is why Kṛṣṇa Himself came to this world taking the responsibility of a servant and performing the activities of a spiritual master. In the form of Gaurāṅga, He said, "I am just a servant of Kṛṣṇa. If anyone wants to personally listen to My words, he can do so; that will ensure his auspiciousness." Kṛṣṇa Himself became immersed in the mood of a devotee (*āśraya-bhāva*). While searching for Kṛṣṇa, He explained to the whole world that Kṛṣṇa is the Lord of all Lords, that He is the most worshipable Personality, and that everyone will attain real auspiciousness only by taking shelter at His lotus feet and by glorifying His name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), associates (*parikara*), specialities (*vaiśiṣṭya*), and pastimes (*līlās*).

Question 257—In what ways does Bhagavān manifest? What is *bhagavat-tattva*?

Answer—*Īśa-tattva*, the spiritual truth about the Supreme Lord, manifests in five types: *para-tattva*

(summum bonum or Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself), *vyūha* (expansions), *vaibhava* (*avatāras*), *antaryāmī* (indwelling Supersoul), and *arcā* (Deity). All of these are the Supreme Lord (*prabhu-tattva*). Besides these five types, all others are *vaśya-tattva* (subordinate personalities) and *sevaka-tattva* (servants). The Lord accepts service from the servants (*sevaka-maṇḍalī*). All of the different manifestations of the Supreme Lord have sweet exchanges or dealings with His respective servants. *Īśitā-kārya* (acting as lord or authority) cannot take place if people whom the Supreme Lord rules are not present in this world; therefore, every manifestation of the Supreme Lord has servants.

First, we should worship the incarnation of the Supreme Lord in the Deity form (*arcā-avatāra*) with appropriate paraphernalia. Then, we should worship the indwelling Supersoul through the mind (*mānasa-pūjā*). After this, we should worship Rāma and other opulent incarnations (*vaibhava-avatāras*). Hanumān and Sugrīva were servants of Śrī Rāma-avatāra. *Vaibhava-avatāras* can be worshiped when They give *darśana* to Their servants. Following this, we should worship *vyūha-tattva*, including Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha (*catur-vyūha*). Finally, we should worship *para-tattva* Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

It is an uphill work (climb) to rise from lower to higher positions. The Deity alone will help us in our campaign to advance on the path towards *para-tattva*. The scriptures state:

yena janma-śataiḥ pūrvaṁ vāsudevaḥ samarcitaḥ
tan-mukhe hari-nāmāni sadā tiṣṭhanti bhārata

Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.237)

Meaning: O best of the dynasty of Bharata, the holy name of Śrī Hari is eternally present only in the mouth of one who has perfectly worshipped Vāsudeva for hundreds of births.

Antaryāmī means immanent, pure conscience

(*sarva-vyāpī viśuddha avimiśrita antaḥkaraṇa*); He is *caitya-guru* (*guru* in the heart). *Antaryāmī* is an internal Entity, but He is not an outside Entity.

Having forgotten Lord Kṛṣṇa, we came to this world. We have come far off from our eternal Home. We are to go back there. Our first aid in getting there is *arcā*; second is *antaryāmī*; third is *vaibhava*; fourth is *vyūha*, and fifth is *para-tattva*.

When one gets direct association with a spiritual master (*guru*) and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas), one gets a chance to hear narrations about Lord Hari's pastimes (*hari-kathā*), which brings auspiciousness. Such auspiciousness will not come only by performing Deity worship for many lifetimes and using worldly intelligence (*prākṛta-buddhi*). The merciful spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas transmit special moods through *hari-kathā.* Although Deities of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa (*śrī vigraha*) mercifully give us *darśana*, They do not transmit such moods (*bhāvas*). The Supreme Personality of Godhead, who lives in our heart as the Supersoul (*antaryāmī* Bhagavān), does not talk to us. The scripture (*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*) states:

śikṣā-guruke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa
antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha ei duī rūpa

Translation: According to *śāstra* the *guru* is a manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. In the form of *guru* Kṛṣṇa bestows mercy on the *bhaktas*. One should know the *śikṣā-guru* to be Kṛṣṇa Himself. In the form of *caitya-guru* Kṛṣṇa gives encouragement and as the topmost *bhakta* He gives association and *śikṣa*.

jīve sākṣāt nāhi tāte guru-caitya-rūpe
śikṣā-guru hana kṛṣṇa mahānta-svarūpe

Translation: Since the living entity cannot directly experience the presence of the *caitya-guru*, the *caitya-guru* appears before him as the *śikṣā-guru,* the topmost devotee, who is non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

antaryāmī īśvarera ei rīti haya

bāhire nā kahe vastu prakāśe hṛdaye

Translation: The Supersoul within everyone's heart speaks not externally but from within. He instructs the devotees in all respects, and that is His way of instruction.

Vaibhava-tattva Śrī Rāma and other incarnations (*avatāra-gaṇa*) talk to living entities (*jīvas*). They give instructions (*upadeśa*) to them, rule them, and even determine the auspicious or inauspicious outcomes of their actions. The activities of *vyūha-tattva* are different. The one indivisible Supreme Absolute Truth (*para-tattva*) manifests in four different forms. One can come to know *īśa-tattva*, the spiritual truth about the Supreme Lord, through the mercy of the Supreme Lord. The scriptures state:

īśvarera kṛpā-leśa haya ta' jāhāre
sei ta īśvara-tattva bujhibāra pāre

Translation: If one receives but a tiny bit of the Lord's favor by dint of devotional service, he can understand the nature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

We think that the Deity is inanimate, but He is a manifestation of knowledge, bliss, and eternity (*sac-cid-ānanda vigraha*). Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva said:

īśvarera śrī-vigraha sac-cid-ānandākāra
se vigraha kaha sattva-guṇera vikāra

Translation: The transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is complete in eternity, cognizance and bliss. However, you describe this transcendental form as a product of material goodness.

śrī-vigraha je nā māne sei ta' pāṣaṇḍa
adṛśya, aspṛśya se haya yama-daṇḍya

Translation: Anyone who does not accept the Transcendental Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa is undoubtedly an atheist. Such a person should never be looked upon or touched, as he is deserving of punishment by Yamarāja, the demigod who punishes

the sinful after death.

The scriptures further state:

pratimā naha tumi—sākṣāt brajendra-nandana
vipra lāgi' kara tumi akārya-karaṇa

Translation: My dear Lord, You are not a statue; You are directly the son of Mahārāja Nanda. Now, for the sake of the old *brāhmaṇa*, You can do something You have never done before.

Śrī Gurudeva helps us in the form of an Intermediate agent or mediator between Bhagavān and living entities (*madhyastha*). He is our guide or transcendental agent (*mārga-pradarśaka*) who instructs us about the Deity (*arcā*), Deity worship (*arcana*), and the worshiper (*upāsaka*). If one has no knowledge about the transcendental nature (*svarūpa*) of the Deity and the Deity worshiper (*arcaka*), Deity worship is like playing with dolls. There is no need to worship dolls; there is a need to worship Bhagavān.

One who is worshiped is known as *arcā*. *Arcā-avatāra* is directly Bhagavān. Bhagavān Himself has manifest in the form of *arcā-avatāra* to bestow auspiciousness on us. Ordinary people have the opinion that the Deity is only a statue or idol. They think that the Deity cannot move or act. However, this is their misconception. If they associate with pure devotees (*śuddha-bhaktas*), this misconception will be eliminated. Realization of the Supreme Absolute Truth depends on hearing (*śravaṇa*) and chanting (*kīrtana*). The scriptures state:

brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhaktilatā-bīja

Translation: According to their *karma*, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Kṛṣṇa. By the mercy

of both Kṛṣṇa and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

mālī hañā sei bīja kare āropaṇa
śravaṇa-kīrtana-jale karaye secana

Translation: When a person receives the seed of devotional service, he should take care of it by becoming a gardener and sowing the seed in his heart. If he waters the seed gradually by the process of *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana* [hearing and chanting], the seed will begin to sprout.

When Śrī Gurudeva performs *kīrtana*, everyone else listens. However, in today's world it is the opposite. Hired speakers and listeners of *hari-kathā* do not themselves hear from higher authority. Instead of becoming a true disciple, they sit on the seat of their spiritual master and pretend to engage in *kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa). It is important to know who Śrī Gurudeva is and how to worship him. The scriptures state:

akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākāraṁ vyāptaṁ yena carācaram
tatpadaṁ darśitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

Translation: Śrī Kṛṣṇa resides in the hearts of all living entities, both moving, such as animals, birds, and insects, and nonmoving, such as trees and plants, in the form of His plenary portion, Paramātmā (the Supersoul). By His inconceivable potency, He pervades every universe and every particle of matter. I offer my humble obeisances to the spiritual master who has revealed to me Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the undivided Absolute Truth without duality.

ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjajana-śalākayā
cakṣur-ūnmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ

Translation: I offer my most humble *daṇḍavat-praṇāma* unto Śrī Gurudeva who has opened my eyes, which were blinded by the darkness of ignorance, with the torchlight of knowledge.

Śrī Gurudeva opens our eyes, which have become blind due to ignorance, with an eyeliner

(*śalākā*) that applies the salve (*añjana*) of divine knowledge (*divya-jñāna*). When the disease of our material eyes is cured, we are free from thoughts of foreign elements or external things. We should not think that we achieve perfection simply by approaching a spiritual master and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is incorrect to think that we possess a coconut just by standing under a coconut tree. To get the coconut pulp and water, we must first climb the tree and then break and peel a coconut. The path of devotional service (*bhajana*) under guidance of a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas, and the path of mysticism (*yoga*), are not one and the same. There is no other means for bringing us spiritual relief. Devotional service (*bhakti-yoga*) is the only way to eliminate all problems. If one only eats, drinks, and studies Vedānta and logic (*nyāya*), that will not lead to spiritual relief and elimination of problems. One cannot go to the planet of Vaikuṇṭha through scholarship in *nyāya-śāstra* (dry logic and reasoning) or in the impersonalistic aspects of Vedānta. One gets auspiciousness only by taking shelter of the lotus feet of a spiritual master and performing devotional service to Lord Hari.

Question 258—What is the perspective of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who are dedicated to their spiritual master?

Answer—"Everyone in the world is worthy of my honor and deserving of my respect. Everyone is my *namasya* or worthy of receiving my obeisances." If such a thought does not come, I cannot offer obeisances to the lotus feet of my spiritual master. "I consider my spiritual master to be the spiritual master of the whole world. Those who abhor my spiritual master also abhor Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the Lord of the whole world. Those who abhor my spiritual master are also hostile to all of the living entities in the world. Those who abhor my spiritual master are hostile to

every human being in the world.” If thoughts like this do not come, I cannot be a servant of the lotus feet of my spiritual master; I cannot offer myself at his lotus feet; I cannot experience my own insignificance (*laghutva*); and I cannot perform *hari-kīrtana*, which requires being more humble than a blade of grass (*tṛṇādapi sunīca*), being as tolerant as a tree, not expecting respect from others (*amānī*), and giving respect to everyone (*mānada*). Only one who has this kind of dedication (*niṣṭhā*) to the lotus feet of a spiritual master can give respect to the whole world, can give up expecting respect from others, and can continuously perform *hari-kīrtana*.

Question 259—What should people do?

Answer—We will attain auspiciousness by completely dedicating ourselves to the lotus feet of Bhagavān and giving up all our personal priorities (*ahamikā*). Non-devotees think: “I am the recipient of enjoyment in the heavenly planets which is the result (*phala*) of selfish fruitive activities (*karma*)” or “I am the recipient of impersonal liberation which is the result of pursuing speculative knowledge (*jñāna*).” However, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is beyond sense perception (*adhokṣaja-vastu*), is the recipient of happiness on the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*). Thus, we should only take shelter of devotional service. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra is always eager to appear before us; however, we will have to become eager to receive His mercy.

Before we make others our disciples, we should first become disciples ourselves. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) see the spiritual master (*guru*) in all things. We cannot engage in *hari-kīrtana* if we consider others to be our disciples or servants. We will have to serve a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas, even if it means putting aside direct service to Lord Kṛṣṇa; only then will we attain

auspiciousness.

We should not do or say anything out of false ego; otherwise, we will face problems and we will have to bear responsibility for what happens. It is our duty to engage in *hari-kīrtana* at all times. If we, as order-carrying servants of Śrī Gurudeva, speak about Bhagavān's name, form, qualities, and pastimes, we will not have to bear any responsibility at all. Whether or not problems come, we will have no personal responsibility. A postman distributes letters, but he is not responsible for the message or content of the letters. Similarly, whether we are qualified or not, if we speak *hari-kathā* as narrated by *Śrī Guru-pāda-padma,* we will not experience any difficulties; we are confident of this fact. If we hear and sing holy *hari-kathā* under guidance of a spiritual master, regarding ourselves as his servant, there will be no problems; rather, we will attain great auspiciousness.

One attains inauspiciousness by associating with and serving an incomplete substance (*apūrṇa-vastu*), and one attains auspiciousness by associating with and serving the Complete Substance (*pūrṇa-vastu*). We must make a full effort to serve the Complete. If we spend our time seeking incomplete things, we can only attain incomplete things. Therefore, while living in this world living entities have only one duty—listening to *hari-kathā*, pastimes of Lord Hari. Such hearing (*śravaṇa*) depends on someone else doing *kīrtana* (loud glorification of the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of the Supreme Personality of Godhead). If we do not get the good opportunity (*suyoga*) to constantly hear *hari-kathā* from saintly persons, we must hear and chant ourselves according to their guidance (*anu-kīrtana*).

Question 260—Is it good to be renounced (*tyāgī*)?

Answer—Never. We are not sense enjoyers (*bhogī*) or renouncers (*tyāgī*); we are devotees or

servants of Bhagavān. Those paupers (spiritually bankrupt persons) who beg for mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*) are hypocrites; they are not devotees. Only sense gratifiers (*bhogī-jana*) hanker for these things. Renounced persons (*tyāgī-jana*) desire liberation, while devotees (*bhaktas*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa desire to serve Him.

It is true that if one becomes a false renunciate, externally he is saved from sense gratification (*bhoga*). However, this is like the logic of 'sleeping on the ground when one's bed breaks in the middle of the night.' In both sense enjoyment and renunciation, whether one gets something or nothing, the outcome is meant for one's personal gain. There is absolutely no question of any relationship with Bhagavān in both of these kinds of activities. Devotees abandon sense gratification for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prīti*), and they remain continually engaged in serving Him (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*). In this way, they attain permanent happiness and eternal auspiciousness.

"I will ask Bhagavān to arrange for my happiness and comfort"—this type of thinking leads to many problems. Some say, "I will enjoy the material energy (*prakṛti*) by becoming Lord Kṛṣṇa," and others say, "I will become a woman and enjoy Kṛṣṇa"—such people are lusty or full of material desires (*sakāma*). When all things are not dovetailed in relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa, this leads to sense enjoyment or renunciation; there will be no devotional service. *Karma* (fruitive activity) and *jñāna* (impersonal knowledge), or sense gratification and renunciation, are non-devotional activities; there is no consideration of Bhagavān in them. The goal of attaining personal happiness is at the root of both sense gratification and renunciation. In contrast, the only goal in devotional service is to make Bhagavān happy.

Question 261—What is our main duty?

Answer—Our main task is to preach the instructions (*upadeśa*) and teachings (*śikṣā*) of Śrīman Mahāprabhu everywhere by practicing them in our lives. This alone will bring auspiciousness to us and to others. Very poor living entities like us are never *daridra-nārāyāṇa*; we must collect money to eliminate our poverty. Love for Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*) is indeed the great wealth (*mahā-dhana*) that we need. [**Note:** nowadays we see many slogans which are opposed to the conclusions of scripture. The authentic scriptures do not at all support ideas such as service to *daridra-nārāyaṇa* (God in the form of the poverty-stricken), *janatā-janārdana* (common people are God), or *jīva hi śiva* (a living entity is Śiva). If poverty-stricken people are Nārāyaṇa, what about wealthy, respectable people who have performed pious activities in their previous lives? What about righteous, learned, honorable people? Why is it that they cannot be Nārāyaṇa? Those who accept the notion of *daridra-nārāyaṇa* are atheists impelled by base impressions (*saṁskāras*) from previous lives; they have no relation whatsoever with pure *ātmā-dharma.*]

prema-dhana binā vyartha daridra jīvana
dāsa kari vetana more deha prema-dhana

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya* 20.37)

Translation: “Without love of Godhead, My life is useless. Therefore I pray that You accept Me as Your servant and give Me the salary of ecstatic love of God.”

Love for Kṛṣṇa is the only desirable thing for us. Mahāprabhu ordered:

pṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma
sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma

(*Caitanya-bhāgavata, Antya* 4.126)

Translation: “In every town and village, the chanting of My name will be heard.”

The illusory name (*māyika-nāma*), instead of

Vaikuṇṭha-nāma (holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa), is currently being propagated in this world. Let the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa be propagated all over the world. A temple of Lord Kṛṣṇa should be constructed according to the opinion of *pāñca-rātrika* scriptures. The Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Ṭhākurajī) should be there, and He should be served and worshiped with respect; this alone will bring auspiciousness to the people. Preaching is only for those of the better class or higher class. Preaching of *Vaikuṇṭha-nāma* (holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa) everywhere is the desire of Mahāprabhu's heart, so we will have to speak *Vaikuṇṭha-kathā* (pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa) to a great extent. We will have to print pamphlets (small books) in great quantity. This will facilitate preaching far and wide. Rich and educated people are wandering here and there expecting wealth, beautiful partners, and prestige. Even if we hurt our throat shouting loudly, they will not listen to narrations about the pastimes and teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. What is the use of wasting our valuable time in this way? (Why should we waste our time on them?) Therefore, our system of preaching should be as follows. Pamphlets should be printed in great number so that people can see what is discussed in philosophy books, and what lofty topics we speak about.

Deceitful persons and hypocrites can never conduct proper preaching activities. If an arrogant person with false ego dresses as a preacher and boasts, “I am the only preacher,” real truth does not manifest to him, and thus the world cannot attain any real auspiciousness through him.

Mahāprabhu told us to engage in the loud glorification of Lord Hari (*hari-kīrtana*), to become more humble than a blade of grass (*tṛṇādapi sunīca*), and to give respect to others (*mānada*). One cannot truly loudly glorify Lord Hari (*hari-kīrtana*) unless one is more humble than a blade of grass. It will not be good to spend our days discussing the good and bad

qualities of ordinary people. We should contemplate what will bring us auspiciousness. Great devotees have observed—***para-carcakera gati nāhi kona kāle***—that one who discusses the good and bad qualities, or character, of others will never be delivered. What does it have to do with me if people with extraneous desires (*anya-abhilāṣī-jana*) engage in various activities? I am saying that such people are not being benefited and are being harmed, and I am even less intelligent than them. That is why my foolish mind has to be engaged in devotional service to Bhagavān (*bhagavad-bhajana*) at all times. A preacher should not wander with a desire to attack others with a 'dissuading policy' (refutation or argumentation, *khaṇḍana-panthā*); this is the job of a cheater (*pratāraka*).

We have forgotten our real work and gotten busy with various tasks. We should strive to 'weed out' (remove) the dirt that has accumulated in our heart. Although this is selfish, it is the most essential thing for me. There is no use of preaching without proper conduct. One cannot engage others in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) unless one is personally doing *hari-bhajana.*

It is essential to follow in the footsteps of Śrī Guru Nityānanda. Śrī Gurudeva, who is the potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is the original preacher. We will have to preach under his guidance; otherwise, real preaching is not possible. The scriptures say:

kali-yuga-dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana
kṛṣṇa-śakti binā nahe tāra pravartana

Translation: In this Age of Kali, real religious propaganda should induce people to chant the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*. This is possible for someone who is especially empowered by Kṛṣṇa. No one can do this without being especially favored by Kṛṣṇa.

The Six Gosvāmīs headed by Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana are our spiritual masters. We will have to remain under their guidance (*ānugatya*). One cannot

render devotional service without following in the footsteps of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. When the dust from the lotus feet of Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, who is non-different from Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, becomes our wealth, only then will we attain auspiciousness. In the kingdom of devotion (*bhakti-rājya*), only the mood of *dāsya* (servitorship) is prominent. This mood (*dāsya-bhāva*) is in all mellows including servitorship (*dāsya*), friendship (*sakhya*), parenthood (*vātsalya*), and conjugal love (*madhura*). In other words, servitorship of Lord Kṛṣṇa is present in all four mellows (*rasas*):

pitā mātā-guru-sakhā-bhāva kene naya
kṛṣṇa-premera svabhāve dāsya-bhāva se karaya

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 6.82)

Translation—Whether one has the mood of a father, mother, spiritual master, or friend towards Lord Kṛṣṇa, it is the nature of love for Him that all moods are based in servitorship (*dāsya-bhāva*).

***Amṛta-pravāha bhāṣya*—**Whatever mood one may have includes servitorship.

Question 262—Who is a spiritual master (*guru*)?

Answer—Śrī Guru-pāda-padma can protect us from death in the form of material existence (*saṁsāra-rūpa-mṛtyu*). A bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*) can deliver us from the fear that 'I will die.' A devotee who has approached Śrī Gurudeva need not listen to the ideas and thoughts of worldly people; he need not approach anyone else. A spiritual master is indeed such an amazing person. Bhagavān is the embodiment of all auspiciousness, and He has entrusted the responsibility of bringing auspiciousness to us to the spiritual master. The lotus feet of Śrī Guru-pāda-padma are the root of all auspiciousness.

Śrī Guru-pāda-padma is that great personality whose mercy removes the false ego of being the doer or proprietor from the heart of a disciple. He is indeed

the potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Guru-pāda-padma speaks the transcendental sound vibration of the *Vedas* or *śrutis* (*śrauta-vāṇī*) in our ears; he always showers our ears with *śrauta-vāṇī*. In this way, he makes us more humble than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. He takes away our desire for respect and inspires us to give respect to all others. He empowers us to loudly glorify Lord Vaikuṇṭha. [He transmits the potency within us that enables the loud glorification of Lord Vaikuṇṭha to manifest on our tongues at all times.] Śrī Guru-pāda-padma liberates us from the clutches of *māyā-śakti*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Guru-pāda-padma gives us the following transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*).

(1) All of the residents of the universe are worthy of our respect and venerable for us.

(2) This entire world is an instrument for serving the spiritual master.

(3) All living entities are our spiritual masters (*gurus*) and worthy of our service (*sevya*). [**Note:** Lord Dattātreya accepted spiritual instructions from twenty-four spiritual masters, and some of them seemed to be ordinary living entities.]

(4) I am a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevaka*).

(5) Our only constitutional religious duty (*dharma*) is to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*).

Question 263—What is the path of devotional service (*bhakti-mārga*)?

Answer—In the non-devotional path (*abhakti-mārga*), there is no discussion of serving Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*). In pure devotional service (*śuddha-sevā*), there is no desire other than to give happiness to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sukha-anusandhāna*). Pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) is the execution of activities that are favorable to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

The goal (*tātparya*) of the devotional path is to

make Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa happy (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-sukha*). In the non-devotional path, there is no consideration of His happiness; this is the path of satisfying one's own senses (*ātmendriya-tarpaṇa*).

Question 264—Who is not able to follow guidance (*ānugatya*)?

Answer—The only means for a living entity to attain auspiciousness is serving Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is *adhokṣaja-vastu*, the Spiritual Personality who is beyond sense perception. No one other than my spiritual master can serve *parama-sevya vastu*, the recipient of topmost service. For one who has not realized this, *ānugatya* (adherence to a spiritual master's guidance) and *ātma-samarpaṇa* (self-dedication) are not possible to the full extent.

Question 265—Do the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas approve of all of our actions?

Answer—Never. Just as a good physician (*sad-vaidya*) cannot speak according to what a patient wants, a bona fide spiritual master (*sat-guru*) will not speak about things that are palatable and pleasurable for the mind of conditioned souls. I cannot approve of the conduct of those who show devotion to their parents only for the purpose of attaining worldly happiness and peace (*śukha-śānti*); we do not share their sense of worldly morality and philosophy (*su-nīti-parāyaṇatā*). We are *śrauta-panthī*, followers of the path of receiving divine knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) by hearing (*śruti*) through a *paramparā* of self-realized *gurus*. *Bhakti-nīti* (principles of unalloyed devotional service) is indeed our ideal (*ādarśa*) and specific subject of interest (*lakṣita-viṣaya*). That is why we cannot become indifferent to *guru-vaiṣṇava-sevā* (service to a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas), and look the other way to seek advice from others. Serving Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevā*) is our ultimate spiritual occupation

(*ātma-dharma*). We do not have time to give up *bhagavat-sevā* and serve others due to becoming subjugated by mental concoction and speculation (*mano-dharma*).

Question 266—Who are *brāhmaṇas*?

Answer—*Brāhmaṇas* search for the supreme transcendental entity (*brahma-vastu*). *Brāhmaṇas* are not absorbed in matters related to the inert material body (*deha-dharma*) and not absorbed in the mind and mental speculation (*mano-dharma*). Only *brāhmaṇas* know Brahman, Śrī Kṛṣṇa

Question 267—How can we make our body useful (*sārthaka*)?

Answer—The material body is an inert object (*jaḍa-padārtha*); it is a bag made of bones and flesh. It has no relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa. One can be relieved of problems by engaging the material body in serving Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-sevā*) under guidance (*ānugatya*) of a spiritual master. One will attain auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) by applying one's worldly intelligence and education (*jāgatika vidyā-buddhi*) etc. in serving Bhagavān.

Question 268—How should we serve devotees of different classes?

Answer—We should give 100% service to a *mahā-bhāgavata* (pure devotee of Bhagavān in the highest stage of devotional life, who is expert in Vedic literature, who has full faith in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and who can deliver the whole world). We should give 66.6% (two-thirds) service to a *madhyama-bhāgavata* (intermediate practitioner of *bhakti*). We should give 33.3% (one-third) service to a *kaniṣṭha-bhāgavata* (neophyte *bhakta* who worships the Deity with faith, but does not serve Kṛṣṇa's *bhaktas*). [**Note:** the qualities of a *madhyama-bhakta* are described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (11.2.46)—"One who has love

for the Supreme Lord, friendship for devotees, mercy for those ignorant of *bhakti*, and neglect for those inimical to the Lord and his devotees is a *madhyama-bhāgavata*.”]

Question 269—Is it correct to regard a spiritual master (*guru*) as *bhoktā-bhagavān*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the enjoyer of everything?

Answer—Never. Śrī Gurudeva is not *bhoktā-bhagavān* or Gopīnātha (Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is subordinate to the *gopīs*). Śrī Guru is *sevaka-bhagavān*, the supreme servant of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa who can award service (*sevā*) to Their lotus feet to submissive disciples (*śiṣyas*). Although *guru* is Bhagavān, he is also the king of devotees (*bhakta-rāja*) who is very dear to Bhagavān (*bhagavat-preṣṭha*). Guru is *āśraya-vigraha* (receptacle or shelter of love of Godhead); he is not *viṣaya-vigraha* (Supreme Enjoyer or recipient of love) like Kṛṣṇa, and he is not the original receptacle of love like Rādhā.

Śrī Gurudeva is *gaura-abhinna-vigraha*, a non-different manifestation of Śrī Gaurāṅga. He is the *prakāśa-vigraha* (manifested pastime form) of Śrī Gaurāṅga who exhibits simultaneous oneness and difference (*acintya-bheda-abhedatva*) with Him. Śrī Gurudeva is *āśraya-jātīyabhagavat-tattva*, the principle of Godhead who is the shelter or receptacle of love of Godhead. It is the offensive mentality of impersonalism (*aparādha-maya nirviśeṣa-vāda*) to mistake a spiritual master, who is *āśraya-tattva* (receptacle of love), to be *viṣaya-jātīyabhagavat-tattva*, the Supreme Recipient of love. Such a mentality is *māyāvāda* (monism) or *pāṣaṇḍatā* (atheism).

The scriptures state:

yadyapi āmāra guru—caitanyera dāsa
tathāpi jāniye āmi tāṅhāra prakāśa
tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, kare gurura sevana

māyā-jāla chuṭe, pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*
Ādi-līlā 1/44, *Madhya-līlā* 22.25)

"Although I know that my spiritual master is a servitor of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, I know him also as a plenary manifestation (*prakāśa*) of Him." In such Kṛṣṇa consciousness, a living entity worships Lord Kṛṣṇa and serves a spiritual master. In this way he gets out of the clutches of *māyā* (illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and attains the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The scriptures advise us to render devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhajana*) under guidance (*ānugatya*) and instruction (*nirdeśa*) of a holy spiritual master, who is dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 270—Is there a particular need to engage in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—Certainly. It is our duty to endeavor to obtain the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from this very moment, without wasting any more time. This applies to everyone—young and old, male and female. We do not know when our life will come to an end; there is no guarantee as to our last exhale (*niḥśvāsa*). Therefore, it is necessary for us all to begin devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) at this very moment.

Some say that now we should spend time enjoying sense gratification, and in the final few days of life we should engage in devotional service to Lord Hari. However, this idea is not logical because 'time is life.' At every moment, our allotted lifespan is diminishing. The moments of life that are passing away will never come back. It is not right to give up devotional service to Lord Hari for even a moment. The *mahājanas* (great personalities who teach and set an example for others) have sung the following song (*kīrtana*):

jīvana samāpti-kāle kariba bhajana
ebe kari gṛha-sukha

kakhana e kathā nāhi bale vijña-jana
e deha patanonmukha

[A wise person never says, "Now I shall remain immersed in the happiness and joys of family life and household life; I shall engage in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa in the final moments of my life," because one has no idea when one's life-airs (*prāṇas*) will depart one's body.]

One will descend into the burning fire-pit of the three-fold miseries if one wastes the good opportunity to use his time to render devotional service. Therefore, it is especially beneficial to associate with saintly persons. Devotional service to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-bhajana*) is our only duty; we will have the great fortune to understand this by associating with saintly persons. Then, we will be qualified to give up endeavors for sense gratification (*bhoga*) and renunciation (*tyāga*), eagerly engage in devotional service, and attain *svarūpa-siddhi.* One achieves spiritual perfection (*siddhi*) by performing continuous devotional service under guidance of a spiritual master, which eliminates gradually the reactions of one's past actions (*karma-phala*).

Question 271—How can one attain service (*sevā*) to Śrī Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—Vṛndāvana-nātha (Lord of Śrī Vṛndāvana) Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra is the eternal son (*nitya-putra*) of Śrī Nanda and Śrī Yaśodā, who are eternally perfect (*nitya-siddha*) residents of Vraja (*braja-vāsīs*). He is not the son of anyone else. Nanda and Yaśodā obtained Svayaṁ-Bhagavān (original Supreme Personality of Godhead) as their son as a result of performing a great deal of service. This Yaśodā-nandana Śrī Śyāmasundara (beautiful dark-complexioned Kṛṣṇa, son of Mother Yaśodā) is certainly the object of our worship (*upāsya*). The verse *ārādhyo bhagavān vrajeśa-tanayaḥ* (meaning 'Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme

worshipful Deity') does not refer to the Śrī Kṛṣṇa who was the son of Devakī (*devakī-nandana*); it refers to the beloved son of Yaśodā (*yaśodā-dulāla*). Vasudeva and Devakī were not qualified to serve like Nanda and Yaśodā were.

Although the worship of Śrī Nanda-nandana is exalted, the worship of Nanda-rāja (King Nanda), who gives joy to Śrī Kṛṣṇa through service, is even better. When we get Nanda-rāja's mercy (*kṛpā*), we will be able to serve his son Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Nanda-nandana resides in Vṛndāvana, and the heart of pure living entities (*śuddha-jīvātmās*) is Vṛndāvana. If one's heart is not completely purified from serving a spiritual master who is the embodiment of Nanda-rāja, one cannot attain Bhagavān in that heart, which represents Śrī Vṛndāvana. The residents of Vraja want to be with Śrī Kṛṣṇa only to serve Him; this is why they are very anxious to meet with Him. They are only happy if they can serve Him. They do not associate with Lord Kṛṣṇa with a 'give and take' mentality which is based on selfish interest. All of the residents of Vraja are free from material desires (*niṣkāma*) and selfless (*niḥsvārtha*). They are naturally attracted to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Only if we can follow in their footsteps will we get the great fortune to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*).

Question 272—What is the nature of the impure mind (*aśuddha-mana*)?

Answer—The mind of a living entity is characterized by *saṅkalpa* (decision or determination) and *vikalpa* (indecision or doubt). The heart of a pure devotee is devoid of the moods of sense enjoyment (*bhoga-buddhi*) and renunciation (*tyāga-buddhi*), and it is continually engaged in serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavān, the complete primeval Personality of Godhead (*pūrṇa-puruṣa*), plays in such a pure heart.

[**Note:** *saṅkalpa*, the mind's function of acceptance, becomes active after *vikalpa*, the mind's

function of doubt and uncertainty. On the spiritual journey, *vikalpa* (inquiry and introspection) is necessary at first, and then *saṅkalpa* (acceptance and realization) can take place.]

Form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), smell (*gandha*), sound (*śabda*), and touch (*sparśa*) are known as *viṣayas*, objects of the senses. It is the impure mind (*aśuddha-mana*), which maintains the false ego of being an enjoyer (*bhoktā-abhimāna*), that is absorbed in these *viṣayas*. Such an impure mind can never realize Bhagavān Śrī Hari, who is the *pūrṇa-puruṣa*. Only one with a clean heart (*śuddha-citta,* pure mind) which has been purified and sanctified by devotional service (*bhakti*) can realize Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Note: The living entity's heart (*citta* or consciousness), influenced by the nature of *saṅkalpa* (determination) and *vikalpa* (indecision), constitutes the living entity's impure mind. By giving up sense enjoyment (*bhoga*) and renunciation (*tyāga*), and by continuously engaging in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa, this consciousness becomes the playground for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is the nature of the pure mind.

Question 273—Are the scriptures (*śāstras*) directly Bhagavān Himself (*sākṣāt-bhagavān*)?

Answer—Yes, the scriptures are directly Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself; they are an incarnation of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa incarnated on Earth in the form of *śāstras* for our welfare. Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva said:

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself in three forms: (1) the *Vedas* or *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; (2) the spiritual master, who is the best of devotees (*bhāgavata-śreṣṭha*); and (3) the Supersoul in everyone's heart (*antaryāmī*)."

'śāstra-guru-ātma'-rūpe āpanāre jānāna
'kṛṣṇa mora prabhu, trātā'—jīvera haya jñāna

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya* 20.123)

Translation—Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa assumes the

forms of the scriptures, the spiritual master, and the indwelling Supersoul to make the living entities conversant about His truth (*tattva*). Upon receiving knowledge (*jñāna*) about Lord Kṛṣṇa, a living entity (*jīva*) understands that Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone is his master (*svāmī*) and protector.

***Anu-bhāṣya*—**Bhagavān manifests in three forms as scriptures, a spiritual master, and the Supersoul within the heart (*caitya-guru*). He illuminates the heart of the conditioned living entities with the Supreme Truth that He is the Lord and Master (Prabhu) of living entities, and that He alone is their deliverer and uplifter (*uddhāra-kartā*).

We will be cheated if we criticize the scriptures due to mental speculation (*manodharma*). The actual meaning of the scriptures is revealed only to those who are surrendered. It is revealed to great persons who have the same degree of firm devotion for their spiritual master and for Bhagavān. Hypocrites (*dāmbhika-vyakti*) who have the false ego of being a scholar (*paṇḍita*) cannot understand the purports (*tātparya*) of the scriptures. We can understand the deep or implied meanings (*marmārtha*) of the scriptures only when we listen to topics of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*hari-kathā*) spoken by saintly persons (*sādhus*), and we completely surrender to that *hari-kathā* by dedicating our body (*kāya*), mind (*mana*), and words (*vākya*).

Question 274—Can you please mercifully give me some advice?

Answer—We can only distribute *hari-kathā* (narrations of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes), as told by Śrī Guru-pāda-padma (spiritual master), in your presence. This *hari-kathā* is like *naivdeya*, transcendental food offered to Lord Kṛṣṇa and then tasted by a spiritual master. We have no qualification apart from this. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *adhokṣaja-vastu*, the Lord who is beyond the cognition and

perception of material senses. He is not accessible through fruitive activities that are meant for sense gratification (*bhogamaya-karma*). He cannot be perceived by the senses. If any of the senses could perceive Him, how could He be beyond them? He is the Center of All-Love, and we are part and parcel of Indefinite All-Loved. Consider the example of the Sun and the particles of its rays. The particles of the sun-ray are not the Sun itself. However, a sun-ray has no existence without the Sun. The particles of sun-rays have an inseparable relationship with the Sun. Similarly, a living entity (*jīva*) is a simultaneously different and non-different manifestation of Bhagavān.

A living entity is an eternal servant of Bhagavān. He has no contact with this material world. Bhagavān is *vibhu-cetana* (Supremely Conscious Being), whereas a *jīva* is *aṇu-cetana* (minutely conscious being). Bhagavān is independent, and living entities are subordinate to Him. Bhagavān is the only shelter of living entities, and serving Him is their eternal constitutional function (*nitya-dharma*).

We living entities are atomic portions of the sovereign independent (*sarva-tantra sva-tantra*) Bhagavān; that is why the qualities of the Whole are present in us in atomic proportion. Lord Kṛṣṇa has complete independence and a living entity's independence is limited and minute. When a living entity shows inclination towards Lord Kṛṣṇa by using his minute independence properly, he becomes happy. When he shows inclination towards sense gratification by forgetting Bhagavān, he experiences distress. A living entity has minute independence; he can go towards service to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa or towards sense gratification. That is why living entities are called *taṭasthā-śakti* (marginal potency of the Supreme Lord). Living entities cannot remain in the *taṭastha-avasthā* (marginal state); therefore, they must go towards either Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa or *māyā*, His illusory potency.

Question 275—Why does our mind get distracted?

Answer—One's mind will get distracted unless one always renders devotional service to Lord Hari with love and affection. One should always engage in *bhajana*, transcendental service performed through spiritual practices, especially hearing, chanting, and meditating upon the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If there is even a slight interruption in devotional service, the mind will find this weakness, and distraction (*citta-vikṣepa*) will overwhelm us.

Question 276—What is *bhajana* or *bhakti* (devotional service)?

Answer—Transcendental activities that are performed for the pleasure of Bhagavān are known as *bhajana*. Serving Bhagavān is *bhakti*. The mood of serving Bhagavān (*dāsya*) gradually expands into the mood of friendship (*sakhya*), the mood of parental affection (*vātsalya*), and the mood of conjugal love (*madhura-rasa*). *Bhajana* is the execution of devotional activities that are favorable to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Such devotional activities should not be covered or influenced by *karma* (reward-seeking activities), *jñāna* (knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), *yoga* (developing mystic powers), *tapasyā* (austerities or asceticism), or *vrata* (vows for self-purification), which are categorized as *anya-abhilāṣa*, desires other than to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Non-devotional *yoga* practices such as *haṭha-yoga* (postures and breathing exercises), *rāja-yoga* (Patañjali's process of imagining a form of the Absolute Truth), *karma-yoga* (offering the fruit of one's work to Bhagavān), *jñāna*-yoga (cultivating knowledge), and *vrata-tapasyā-yoga* (austerities and vows for self-purification) are not *bhajana*. One's heart cannot be completely purified if one engages in *karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga, tapa,* and *vrata*, instead of performing the limbs of *bhakti-yoga,*

including hearing *hari-kathā* (narrations of pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa). Only serving Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevā*) can make one's restless (*aśānta*) mind become purified (*nirmala*) and peaceful (*śānta*).

Question 277—Is devotional service (*bhakti*) the religious principle (*dharma*) of Kali-yuga?

Answer—It is not just for Kali-yuga; devotional service is the *dharma* that is *sārva-kālika* (applicable at all times), *sārvatrika* (applicable in all places), and *sārva-janīna* (applicable to the whole world). *Karma* (reward-seeking activities), *jñāna* (knowledge leading to impersonal liberation), and *yoga* (developing mystic powers) relate to *naimittika-prastāvita-dharma*, temporary or occasional activities of the material body and mind. They are not constitutional functions of a living entity, a soul. Devotional service is the only eternal activity of liberated personalities. *Karma*, *jñāna*, *yoga, tapa* (austerity), and *vrata* (vows) are activities performed by conditioned living entities who are afflicted with unwanted habits.

Question 278—How will our desire for sense gratification go away?

Answer—We will attain auspiciousness the very day that we are able to understand, by the mercy of saintly persons (*sādhus*) and a spiritual master, that we are servants of Bhagavān. Our propensity for sense enjoyment and wickedness will go away only after we have received transcendental knowledge. As long as we are not fixed in the true ego of being a servant of Bhagavān, and as long as we do not develop the true conception of being a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇava), we will see the material world as an object for our enjoyment, rather than as the property of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*īśāvāsya*). In other words, we will forget the fact that this world is meant for the enjoyment of Bhagavān. Consequently, our wicked

mentality of ownership and possessiveness (*prabhutva*) arises. The only way that we can be saved from such a pitiable state is to associate with pure devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who seeks auspiciousness should never approach or go near preachers who are puffed up with pride, and who are full of lust, anger, greed, delusion, and envy. One who does so will not attain divine knowledge. If we do not associate with great personalities who are devoid of material desires, our lust, our hankering, our tendency to lord over material nature, and our tendency to enjoy sense gratification will not go away. Moreover, our true ego of being a servant of Bhagavān will not awaken. The scriptures say:

mahat kṛpā binā kona karma bhakti naya
kṛṣṇa-bhakti dūre rahu saṁsāra nahe kṣaya
sādhu-saṅga-kṛpā kiṁvā kṛṣṇera upāya
kāmādi duḥsaṅga chāḍi śuddha-bhakti pāya

Meaning: The mercy of great personalities is the only way to attain devotion; there is no other way. Without the association of saintly persons, one cannot become free from material bondage, what to speak of attaining devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is only by the grace of *sādhu-saṅga* (association of saintly persons) and the grace of Kṛṣṇa that one is able to give up bad association, such as with lust, and attain pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*).

Question 279—Who can do the work of a spiritual master?

Answer—To deliver unfortunate creatures like us, Bhagavān sends great personalities (*mahā-puruṣas*) from the spiritual world (*para-jagata*) who are disguised as human beings. They deliver those who are suffering from the three-fold miseries, and send them to the abode of Bhagavān. These great personal associates (*nija-jana*) of Bhagavān are His messengers (*dūtas*). They are the carriers (*vāhakas*) of the transcendental message of Vaikuṇṭha or the

spiritual world (*Vaikuṇṭha-vāṇī*). Only they can perform the work of a spiritual master.

The sword-like tongue of great personalities is always ready to sacrifice the propensity for sense gratification (*bhoga-pravṛtti*) and renunciation (*tyāga-pravṛtti*) at the *yūpa-kāṣṭha* (stake to which a sacrificial animal is tied). Such personalities are genuine saintly persons (*sādhus*), and they are the only true spiritual masters.

Śrī Guru-pāda-padma is a great personality whose work (*kārya*), intelligence (*buddhi*), and philosophy (*darśana*) are exclusively used in the service (*sevā*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the object of *prema* (*viṣaya-vigraha*). Such personalities have no interest in listening to anyone's flattery, and they fearlessly propagate real truth.

Only one who does not speak about anything other than *hari-kathā* (narrations of Lord Hari's pastimes); does not instruct about any *dharma* (religious principle) other than service to Bhagavān; and does not spend even one second of twenty-four hours in non-devotional activities, is qualified to be a spiritual master.

An insincere hypocrite (*bhaṇḍa*) cannot be a *guru*. One who has aspiration for mundane activity can never be a spiritual master.A pseudo-*guru* [imposter or imitation *guru*] should be turned out and exposed. [The 'mask' of a fake *guru* should be exposed.] If such a so-called *guru* at first offers all of his initiated devotees to the lotus feet of Bhagavān, but later engages them in his personal service collecting wealth (*kanaka*), women (*kāminī*), and prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*), he should be considered a cheater (*ṭhaga*) and abandoned. One must never hear *hari-kathā* from such a materialistic (*asat*) person. One who usurps things meant for serving the Supreme Enjoyer Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*viṣaya-vigraha*) and uses them for his own sense gratification (*bhoga*) is not fit to be called a spiritual master. The scriptures

state:

īhā yasya harer dāsye karmaṇā manasā girā
nikhilāsv apy avasthāsu jīvan-muktaḥ sa ucyate

(*Nāradīya Purāṇa*)

A person is considered to be liberated even while living in the material body (*jīvan-mukta*), under all conditions, if his actions (*karma*), thoughts (*mana*), and words (*vāṇī*) are exclusively employed in serving Bhagavān. One must never associate with atheists who give up serving Bhagavān for the sake of doing social service. Such persons cannot bring auspiciousness to themselves or others. While doing social service, they fall into the pit of *māyā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa's illusory energy, and drag others into trouble.

We must not associate with those who merely pretend to chant on beads, or who pray loudly with the intention of cheating Bhagavān; such cheaters do not directly see Kṛṣṇa in every sound (*śabda*), nor do they see Gaura-sundara personally in every word (*uccārāṇa*). The epitome of scholarship (*pāṇḍitya*) is having a relationship with Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sambandha*). When our only desire (*citta-vṛtti*) is to serve Bhagavān under the guidance of, and in close association with, a spiritual master, we will see the entire world as an instrument for serving Bhagavān. We will attain auspiciousness only when we serve Bhagavān with all of the things of this world.

The door to auspiciousness opens for us when we associate with and serve great personalities who are dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha mahā-puruṣas*). Such great personalities see Bhagavān everywhere, and see everything in relationship with Him. They also see their spiritual master everywhere and in everything. They are more humble than a blade of grass and more tolerant than a tree. They are continually engaged and fully absorbed in *hari-kīrtana*, loud glorification of Lord Hari. They give respect to all others (*mānada*) without expecting any respect in return (*amānī*). One gets such a *sad-guru*

only by great fortune (*mahā-bhāgya*). One cannot approach Gaura-sundara if one accepts a servant of the illusory potency (*māyā-dāsa*) as a spiritual master. Since Śrī Gaura-sundara is not present in this world in the manifest pastimes (*prakaṭa-līlā*), we should continually associate with sincere (*niṣkapaṭa*) Vaiṣṇavas. We should dovetail our *citta-vṛtti* (propensity of the heart) and desires with theirs. We should surrender to the lotus feet of a spiritual master who knows *kṛṣṇa-tattva* (truth about Lord Kṛṣṇa), and completely dedicate ourselves to him. If we associate with him, serve him, and follow his guidance (*ānugatya*), we will certainly attain auspiciousness.

Question 280—How can we get a real spiritual master?

Answer—The first and foremost qualification for auspiciousness of the soul (*ātma-kalyāṇa*) is taking shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru-pada-āśraya*). Everyone gets a spiritual master (*guru*) according to his qualification and the desire of Bhagavān, just as Christians get Jesus and Muslims get Mohammad. By destiny, some accept a worldly family priest (*viṣayī-kula-guru*) as their spiritual master, and as a result they become attached to material existence (*saṁsāra*). If my destiny is good, and I sincerely search and pray to Bhagavān for a bona fide spiritual master, I will certainly get one in this very lifetime by the mercy of Bhagavān. Having taken shelter at his lotus feet, I will become blessed and successful. The scriptures tell us:

bahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru kṛṣṇa prasāde pāya bhaktilatā-bīja
kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā karena kona bhāgyavāne
guru-antaryāmī rūpe śikhāya āpane
guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe
guru rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe
yadyapi āmāra guru caitanyera dāsa

tathāpi jāniye āmi tāhāra prakāśa
śikṣā guruke ta jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa
antaryāmī bhakta-śreṣṭha ei dui rūpa
jīve sākṣāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe
śikṣā-guru hana kṛṣṇa mahānta svarūpe

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

In other words, while traveling in the material universe (*brahmāṇḍa*), by the mercy of a spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa a fortunate living entity (*jīva*) obtains a seed of the creeper of devotion. Kṛṣṇa shows mercy to a fortunate person by personally teaching him in the form of the indwelling Supersoul. According to the scriptures, a spiritual master is an expansion of the form (*rūpa*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa showers mercy on devotees in the form of a spiritual master. Although my spiritual master is a servant of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, I also consider him to be His expansion (*prakāśa*). I regard an instructing spiritual master (*śikṣā-guru*) to be the direct representative (*svarūpa*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

O Kṛṣṇa-candra, please mercifully accept me as Your servant. I served this temporary material universe (*anitya-saṁsāra* or *jagat*) with the false ego of being a householder (*gṛha-kartā*) or enjoyer (*bhoktā*). However, I will no longer continue that service. When a living entity sincerely prays to Bhagavān with an agitated heart, merciful Śrī Kṛṣṇa appears before him in the form of a *mahānta-guru* (*guru* as a living *sādhu* or saintly person).

If one does not have the great fortune (*saubhāgya*) to get transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) from a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*), one is not qualified to serve Bhagavān. No human being (*manuṣya*) or demigod (*devatā*) has the power to give transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*). Therefore, it is essential to accept a bona fide spiritual master.

Question 281- What is the purpose of your mission?

Answer—We had no need at all to create a mission. Since people were following the wrong path, we used our *bhagavad-sevā* (service to Bhagavān) to serve the mission. We made a mission to deliver human society from the adverse path. Even if we are offered a position millions of times greater than ruler of the entire Earth, which is full of sense objects, we will discard it like stool or urine. Humans should give up the wrong direction and become situated at the lotus feet of Gaura-sundara, which are the root of all auspiciousness. Our small effort is for this purpose. Demigods like Brahmā, Śiva, Vāyu (wind god), and Varuṇa (ocean god), as well as preachers of various religions, must experience difficulty and trouble to the degree that they do not heed the message of Śrī Caitanyadeva. Those who serve Caitanya-deva are worshipers of the ultimate truth (*parama-vāstava-satya*). They have gotten *darśana* of the limitless beauty of Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva, so they cannot be influenced by the words of even the most intelligent worldly people who are considered by laymen to be respected preachers of various religious philosophies. Such persons cannot create doubts in the heart of devotees of Lord Caitanya. [The servitors of Lord Caitanya have witnessed His limitless beauty, and as a result, they cannot be swayed or confused by the words of the giant intellects of the world who are recognized as great preachers by the masses.] The fangs of the poisonous snake of sense objects are broken when one is in proximity to devotees of Lord Gauracandra. No deception or tricks of the material world can cheat those in whose ears the transcendental message (*vāṇī*) of Śrī Gaurasundara has entered.

True devotees of Bhagavān cannot be enticed or bewildered by artificial endeavors to control the senses according to Pātañjali's mysticism (*yoga-*

patha), nor by desires to enjoy sense objects (*viṣayas*) such as heavenly women like Menakā and Urvaśī. Some think that it is a great achievement to become free from distress by adopting pessimism (*nirāśā-vāda*). However, servants who carry the shoes of devotees of Bhagavān are totally free from such thinking. Devotees of Bhagavān do not consider privation from the necessaries (necessities) of life to be a major problem. They do not consider it necessary to stay away from knowledge of the external world, as a weaver plugs his ears with cotton. They are not lusty for things that might attract them. Our love and attachment for material objects will take us to hell because we are like a diseased animal. Only the love (*prīti*) of Bhagavān is desirable (*kāmya*) for us. One cannot take shelter at the lotus feet of Gaurasundara with a desire for worldly acquisition; one will attain auspiciousness by using all things to serve Him.

"I will stay in a solitary place and chant the names of Gaura and Nitāī"—this is another type of dishonesty and desire for one's own happiness or prestige. All of the senses are enemies. Śrī Caitanya-deva preached about the position of devotional service (*bhakti-pada*), which is the eternal constitutional function of the soul (*nitya ātma-vṛtti*). All of these enemies have placed millions of thorns on the path to that position. People are mistaking false enjoyment (*phalgu-bhoga*), false renunciation (*phalgu-tyāga*), and imitation devotional service (*kapaṭa-bhakti*), which are full of extraneous desires including fruitive activities (*karma*), impersonal knowledge (*jñāna*), and mysticism (*yoga*), to be actual devotional service. "I will serve *adhokṣaja* Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is beyond the grasp of the senses. I will not be a street-cleaner by serving my dog, which is engaged in open or hidden gratification of the senses. I will not be a washerman by serving a donkey. I will not be an

engineer by serving bricks and stones." Only those who think like this can get the love of Mahāprabhu; they can take shelter of the path of devotional service. Śrī Gaura-sundara is not an insentient object like a boundary wall made of stone and bricks. Our intelligence is pervaded with aversion to Lord Kṛṣṇa and devotional service to Him. Only the mercy of Lord Śrī Gaura-sundara can deliver us from such a non-devotional mentality; there is no other way. If others merely pretend to show mercy to us, we should understand them to be cheaters. Such cheaters do not come before me loudly and constantly glorifying the holy name of Gaurāṅga. They do not sing *gaura-nāma* (holy names of Lord Gaurāṅga) and *gaura-līlā* (pastimes of Lord Gaurāṅga). How can they be a spiritual master? Those who are obsessed with petty worldly things can do the work of a school-teacher, but they cannot do the work of a spiritual master.

kibā vipra kibā nyāsī śūdra kene naya
jeī kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya

Whether one is a *brāhmaṇa*, *sannyāsī*, or *śūdra*, if he is learned in all of the truths regarding Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he is to be accepted as a *guru*.

The activities within the material world, which are caused by the three modes of material nature, are troubling me. A spiritual master wants to deliver me from this trouble. Therefore, he cuts the knot in the heart by delivering an extremely painful blow. He can give sincere mercy. He does not want to flatter me. He can give mercy without deception; he is indeed a spiritual master.

Question 282—What is our duty?

Answer—We say to everyone in the world, "For the time being you stop and lend your submissive and regardful ear. You should kindly listen to some *śrauta-kathā*, topics of the scriptures, from the mouth of a spiritual master and saintly persons, leaving aside all of your beliefs and conceptions." I

am partisan to Transcendental sound. We cannot advance an inch towards Bhagavān on the path of Vraja if we walk carrying on our heads the burden of the rubbish (bad thoughts) that we have accumulated. Those who are famous as giant intellects in this world must listen to Transcendental sound and cease their mundane talk and gossip for some time. Empiricism must never medium; devotional service (*bhakti*) is not a Suggestive object [an optional thing]. "If by chance I get *bhakti* that is fine; if not, no worry" — *bhakti* is not like this. It is Positive in nature; it points to Reality or Truth. Devotional service is indeed the idea of subservience to Personal Godhead (Bhagavān).

Question 283—Who is a Vaiṣṇava (devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa)?

Answer—

kanaka-kāminī, pratiṣṭhā-bāghinī
chādiyāche yāre sei to' vaiṣṇava
sei anāsakta, sei śuddha bhakta
saṁsāra tathāya pāya parābhava

The desire for wealth (*kanaka*), women (*kāminī*), and fame (*pratiṣṭhā*) is a tigress. One who is spared by this tigress is indeed a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇava). He is detached (*anāsakta*) and is a pure devotee (*śuddha-bhakta*). Such a devotee has conquered the mundane world and its illusions of enjoyment.

Question 284—What should our perspective be?

Answer—If even near and dear family members, relatives, and friends who are related to one's physical body are averse to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, they should be regarded as strangers. One must give up bad association (*duḥ-saṅga*) and take good association (*sat-saṅga*). One cannot completely give up bad association unless one associates with saintly persons (*sādhu-saṅga*). Those

who are averse to, indifferent to, or envious of devotees of Śrī Caitanya-deva should be regarded as averse to Śrī Caitanya-deva Himself.

Those who spend their days hearing and chanting pastimes of Bhagavān are saintly persons or devotees. Non-devotees (*abhaktas*) and dishonest (*asādhu*) persons neglect subjects related to the satisfaction of Lord Kṛṣṇa's senses, and subjects about His transcendental enjoyment and sports. They spend their days immersed in worldly topics or ideas of impersonalism. “This world is for my sense gratification (*bhoga*), and I am the sense enjoyer (*bhogī*)”—this is their view of the world (*jagad-darśana*). However, this world is actually the residence of Lord Jagannātha; it is His object of enjoyment.

Only when one knows that Śrī Guru-pāda-padma is dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa and is an eternally-perfect Vraja-vāsī (resident of Vraja) will one have the good fortune to go to Vraja. It is our duty to follow in the footsteps of Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, who is an eternally-perfect, great personality; only then can we go to Vraja. If we become independent and the idea of measuring things related to Bhagavān comes, we will be trapped in material existence and unable to go to Vraja. We should attempt to engage in devotional service to Lord Hari with heart and soul, with all sincerity, and without deceit. Our days are limited; we will have to leave this world.

We should serve under the guidance of the lotus feet of a spiritual master, who is the shelter of love of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*āśraya-vigraha śrī-guru-pāda-padma*). When one’s intelligence is strongly directed to service (*sevā*), one has no other concerns (*cintā*). We attain auspiciousness when the foot-dust of Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, who is a follower of Śrī Rūpa, is the only object of our desire. If our firm goal is to give happiness to Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga, the desire for our own happiness will not be an obstacle. We

should maintain our life with the goal of attaining devotional service to Lord Hari. Even if many obstacles and calamities come, we must never abandon devotional service.

Question 285—What does Gauḍīya Maṭha teach?

Answer—“Back to God and back to home” is the message of Gaudiya Math. “Let us go to Bhagavān; let us return to our home”—this is indeed the message of Gauḍīya Maṭha.

Gauḍīya Maṭha has incarnated just to propagate the topics of pure devotion and the teachings of Mahāprabhu in the world. Gauḍīya Maṭha is interested in preaching the invaluable teachings and instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. The preachers (*pracārakas*) of Gauḍīya Maṭha follow the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and propagate narrations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the world. They are practicing preachers who exhibit ideal, exemplary conduct.

Question 286—How can we have a vision (*darśana*) of Bhagavān?

Answer—We must take shelter of *niṣkiñcana-mahāpuruṣas* (great personalities renounced from wealth and material possessions) who worship Bhagavān all the time. We can have *darśana* of Bhagavān only when they open our spiritual eyes with their lotus hands. Great saintly persons render devotional service to Bhagavān at all times and at every step. They do nothing other than serve Him and offer all of their possessions to Him. We can have realization of Bhagavān only by serving such saintly persons (*sādhus*) and a spiritual master (*guru*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa is actually the personal wealth of devotees. Only devotees can give Lord Kṛṣṇa to us; they can give us His *darśana*. We will get perfection only when we please devotees.

One cannot attain the realization of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa through a consciousness or mentality focused on sense enjoyment. Instead, realization of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is achieved through a consciousness oriented towards submissive devotional service. By consistently engaging in the devotional service of Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga, while recognizing oneself as the servant of Bhagavān, one can attain a direct realization of the object of service, Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is solely through the path of loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa that direct vision of the object of service becomes possible; there is no other means to achieve this.

Question 287—Who can attain Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—Only one who has strong faith that Lord Kṛṣṇa will certainly protect him will attain perfection (*siddhi*); in other words, he will attain Lord Kṛṣṇa. The only way to be truly protected is to take shelter of the lotus feet of devotees who depend completely on Bhagavān, and who continually discuss His pastimes. Such devotees are *patita-pāvana;* they purify and deliver fallen souls. Therefore, they will certainly protect those who surrender to them. Only one who has surrendered to their lotus feet will be protected, while one who has not surrendered will not be protected. One will certainly get the complete mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa when one completely surrenders to Him.

Question 288—Can a person who has the false ego of being a doer attain auspiciousness?

Answer—A person who wanders on the path of action (*karma-mārga*) indeed thinks that he is a doer. Fruitive activity (*karma*) is the path of inauspiciousness; there is no place for devotional service (*bhakti*) or auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) on that path. We run towards inauspiciousness when we regard *karma* to be great. We try to become dear to

everyone by engaging in pious activities (*sat-karma*). We are busy seeking love and affection from beloved friends and relatives by engaging mainly in worldly activities. However, this will not bring us auspiciousness. The material world will not deliver or uplift us. Therefore, devotees of Bhagavān mercifully tell us that serving Bhagavān is our only duty. The duty of all living entities, including demigods, animals, birds, and human beings, is to serve Him. However, ignoring the words of devotees, we think, "Since I am a father, my duty is to serve my sons and daughters, and make arrangements for their study and education" or "Since I am a son, it is my duty to serve my mother and father." In this way, so many types of determinations (*saṅkalpas*) arise in our heart. This is known as *avaiṣṇavatā* (non-devotional mood), *bhagavad-bahirmukhatā* (aversion to serving Bhagavān), and slavery to *māyā*, the illusory energy of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 289—How will we develop taste for chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—*Sādhaka*s (practitioners of *sādhana*, spiritual discipline to achieve the specific goal of *bhāva-bhakti*) who aspire for auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) offer themselves at the lotus feet of the holy name (*śrī-nāma*). They know with conviction that one attains all spiritual perfection by *śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the loud congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The holy name of Lord Hari (*hari-nāma*) will dance on our tongue the very day that we attain perfection in chanting the *mantra* (*mantra-siddhi*).

We will not attain auspiciousness if we pretend to engage in devotional service (*bhajana*) while being averse to serving devotees who reside in a *maṭha* (monastery) and who engage in *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. One will become qualified to engage in *śrī-nāma-kīrtana* only when one respectfully serves the residents of a

maṭha. If one does so, one's taste for chanting the holy name will increase. If instead we remain engaged in serving friends and relatives (*ātmīya-svajana*), we cannot properly engage in *hari-nāma*. Householder devotees can stay at home and give up the false conception of being the doer. They should be free from attachment to household life by the influence of associating with saintly persons and devotional service. Moreover, instead of regarding persons at home and objects in the household as meant for one's personal enjoyment, these should be regarded as meant for Bhagavān's service. Householder devotees who think like this will also attain auspiciousness.

One can chant *hari-nāma* only in the association of saintly persons (*sādhus*); one cannot do so in the association of *asādhus*, nondevotees who are not saintly by nature. One will not be able to chant the holy name if one is indifferent to: (1) associating with saintly persons (*sādhu-saṅga*); (2) hearing narrations of Lord Hari's pastimes (*hari-kathā-śravaṇa*); and (3) serving Lord Hari, a spiritual master, and Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa). Therefore, whether one is a householder or a resident of a *maṭha*, one should remain eagerly and diligently engaged in these three activities. Only then can one attain auspiciousness, develop taste for chanting, experience awakening of spiritual consciousness, and realize one's eternal constitutional position (*svarūpa*).

Question 290—When will we attain pure service (*śuddha-sevā*) and an audience with Bhagavān?

Answer—We truly attain service to Bhagavān starting on the day we realize that Śrī Gurudeva, who is the embodiment of service (*sevā-vigraha*), is nondifferent from Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu. At that time, mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), and

even liberation (*mukti*) appear to be insignificant. When we realize that *mahānta-gurudeva,* a foremost Vaiṣṇava performing the function of a *guru*, is a beloved personal associate (*nija-jana*) of Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva, only then will narrations of the pastimes of Śrī Rādhā-Govinda manifest in our pure heart. Only then will it be possible to have an audience (*darśana*) with Bhagavān.

Question 291—Why do animals eventually take birth as human beings?

Answer—Animals eventually are born as humans so that they will be able to perform devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*). What to speak of animals, even demigods desire to attain a human birth. Our life is simply wasted if, despite having obtained such a human birth, which is rare even for demigods, we remain busy eating and enjoying sense gratification like animals, we remain intoxicated in the material world (*saṁsāra*) and do not engage in devotional service to Lord Hari, or we remain in the mood of a first-class sense enjoyer under the pretense of performing *hari-bhajana* (devotional service of Lord Hari). If we do so, we will get no benefit from attaining the human form of life.

If we do not engage in devotional service to Lord Hari, what is the use of being alive? A life that is devoid of devotional service of Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) is futile; one will have to experience distress lifetime after lifetime.

Question 292—What do devotees say?

Answer—Devotees of Śrī Bhagavān say, "O living entity! You are a servant of Bhagavān. You have no relationship with this material world. Since you are a servant of Bhagavān, you should serve Him; do not do anything else. If you do anything other than serve Lord Hari, you will only get anxiety and restlessness."

"O living entity, do not satisfy your senses in

the name of serving Lord Hari. Remember that the act of satisfying the senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa is known as *sevā* (service). Trying to satisfy your own senses, or trying to make friends, relatives, and family members happy, is not service. Regarding such activities as service is nothing but cheating oneself. Do not make the mistake of thinking that one who serves a household (*gṛha*) is a servant of Bhagavān. Take shelter of Bhagavān. Do not waste time in serving the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*māyā*); you will certainly not attain auspiciousness by doing so. Instead, day by day your attachment to material existence (*saṁsāra*) will increase. As a result, you will not attain Bhagavān. You should be busy serving Bhagavān; only then will you attain Him. I advise you to be clever and intelligent and serve Lord Kṛṣṇa, disregarding those who are averse to Him. Only then will Śrī Guru and Śrī Gaurāṅga be pleased with you."

Question 293: Who serves Bhagavān in the temple of his heart?

Answer—Pure devotees (*śuddha-bhaktas*) install Bhagavān in the temple of their heart. They are established in the mood of *bhāve bhāve hṛdaya bhavane bhāvayeyaṁ bhavantam.*

[**Note:***bhāve bhāve*—in every lifetime; *hṛdaya*—of my heart; *bhavane*—within the temple; *bhāvayeyam*—may I meditate; *bhavantam*—upon You. "I only pray that life after life I can meditate upon You with great love in the temple of my heart."]

nāhaṁ vande tava caraṇayor-
dvandvam advanda-hetoḥ
kūmbhīpākaṁ gurum api hare
nārakaṁ nāpanetum
ramyā-rāmā-mṛdutanulatā
nandane nābhirastuṁ
bhāve bhāve hṛdaya-bhavane
bhāvayeyaṁ bhavantam

"O Lord, I am not performing *bhajana* so that

You will remove the worldly misery that is strangling me. I am not praying at Your feet for entrance into the heavenly garden of Nandana-kānana where one can enjoy with beautiful women for a very long time, nor am I praying for liberation so that I will never again have to suffer for nine months in the womb of a mother, and never again be punished by the messengers of Yamarāja. I pray that in the core of my heart You will increase the *bhāva* of Vṛndāvana, where You are roaming with the *gopīs* and enjoying amorous pastimes. In meditation on the descriptions of these pastimes, I will at once become completely lost in *prema*—this is what I am praying for. I am praying that I may take birth as a *gopa* or *gopī*, or even as a peacock or tree or anything, anywhere within the sixty-four square-mile Vraja-maṇḍala. There I will acquire the company of a *rasika* devotee who, being full of the *bhāva* of Vṛndāvana, will describe all of these pastimes to me, and then my life will be meaningful."

Devotees such as Prahlāda established Bhagavān in their heart and served Him. A temple of Bhagavān cannot be kept open at all times, but a temple of the heart can. A *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī-bhakta* (neophyte devotee) cannot understand what it means to serve Bhagavān in the temple of the heart.

Question 294—Who is a spiritual master (*guru*), and how should one serve him?

Answer—A spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas are transcendental (*aprākṛta*) temples of Bhagavān (*śrī-mandiras*). Bhagavān does not reveal Himself to everyone; He manifests in the heart of *guru* and Vaiṣṇavas. Many people want to have *darśana* (vision) of Bhagavān, but they do not know that it is only through the *darśana* of a spiritual master that one can see Bhagavān. Without the lotus feet of a spiritual master (*śrī-guru-pāda-padma*), devotion (*bhakti*) cannot even begin. A spiritual master is the

connection who helps us see the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa, by His unlimited (*apāra*) compassion, sends spiritual masters here to this material world; they are His best servants (*śreṣṭha-sevakas*) and His best devotees (*śreṣṭha-vaiṣṇavas*). Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, whose soft, reddish feet are comparable to lotuses, is indeed the embodiment (*mūrta-vigraha*) of *karuṇā-śakti*, Lord Kṛṣṇa's potency to shower compassion and mercy upon conditioned living entities.

Śrī Gurudeva is our most affectionate and sincere well-wisher (*parama-ātmīya*). It is not enough to serve him only formally, and in a mood of opulence (*aiśvarya*) and awe and reverence (*sambhrama*). Rather, eventually we should serve him in a mood of *viśrambha*, in which we are completely unaware of his majesty or greatness, in which there is intimacy without feelings of inferiority or reverence, in which there is deep faith and love without formality, and in which we feel that we are not separate or independent from him. Only then will we achieve auspiciousness. The mercy and guidance of a spiritual master are more relevant, applicable, and well-suited (*prayojanīya*) for us than those of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is the Guru of all *gurus*, and He said that even though a *guru* is nondifferent from Bhagavān, he is also preeminent (*pradhāna*) among devotees of Bhagavān. One cannot serve Bhagavān if one abandons the spiritual master, who is the king of devotees (*bhakta-rāja*), and who is very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*). The only way for living entities (*jīvas*) to attain auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) is to serve a spiritual master.

Question 295—What is transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*)?

Answer—Thinking that we are objects or recipients of service (*sevya*), and that we are doers (*kartā*) and enjoyers (*bhoktā*), is indeed material

knowledge (*acid-jñāna*) or ignorance (*ajñānatā*). We are meant to be enjoyed by the incomparable (*advitiya*) Bhagavān; we are His servants. This realization is transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) or spiritual knowledge (*cinmaya-jñāna*).

Question 296—How can we develop our mental strength?

Answer—We are weak; we need strength of mind. We will get mental strength by hearing powerful narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes from the mouth of living saintly persons. It is impossible to get mental strength without associating with powerful saintly persons.

Question 297—How will we attain auspiciousness?

Answer—We are servants of Bhagavān; therefore, we just need to serve Him. Only that service will bring auspiciousness to us. Serving Bhagavān is of paramount importance for our welfare; no other duty is superior to that service.

This material world of repeated birth and death (*saṁsāra*) is created by the illusory potency (*māyā*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Instead of entering this *saṁsāra*, we should enter the spiritual planet and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Instead of being a false doer (*kartā*), we should be a servant (*sevaka*). Only then will we attain auspiciousness.

Question 298—Why do surrendered devotees (*śaraṇāgata-bhaktas*) collect alms (*bhikṣā*)?

Answer—Surrendered devotees do exactly what Bhagavān wants them to do. According to the instructions of Śrī Gaurasundara, devotees serve Him by going door-to-door and begging alms to bestow auspiciousness upon all living entities. That is, they go door-to-door to distribute the topmost wealth that

they have obtained, and to invite everyone to the great festival of service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā mahā-utsava*). They do not go anywhere for the purpose of satisfying their own senses (*ātma-indriya-prīti-vāñchā*). Nothing compares to the mercy of devotees. They always endeavor to make everyone eager to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhagavat-unmukha*).

Question 299—How can we decrease our interest in worldly life?

Answer—This material world is like a dry well covered with dry grass. Once one falls into the well of the material world, it is very difficult to get out. No one can get out of the well of material existence by his own endeavor, without the mercy of Bhagavān. **The moment we forget the fact that we are servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa, we have to become a servant of the illusory potency (*māyā*).** Service (*sevā*) to Bhagavān alone is devotional service (*bhakti*), and the desire for sense gratification leads to non-devotional activities. The only way to give up the non-devotional attitude (*abhakti*) is to hear narrations of pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa from a spiritual master (*guru*) and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). One should offer obeisances (*praṇipāta*) to them, ask them pertinent questions in a submissive mood (*pari-praśna*), and exhibit a service mood (*sevā-vṛtti*). Only then will the propensity (*pravṛtti*) toward material life go away, and consequently one will develop a taste for congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*). [**Note:** one must have full faith in one's *guru*. After serving him, one may request, "If I am qualified, please mercifully answer my question." Such submissive inquiry is known as *pari-praśna*.]

Question 300—What is the mentality of a surrendered soul?

Answer—Unalloyed devotees simply bow

down their heads and submissively accept all of Bhagavān's statements and arrangements. If one is restless or fickle (*caṅcala*) in His arrangements, this shows one's lack of faith (*śraddhā*) and *anya-abhilāṣa* (desires other than to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa).

Bhagavān's mercy may appear to be a cruel punishment, or a gift of opulence, from external vision. Devotees, however, do not see things in this way; they just remain surrendered in one-pointed dedication to Bhagavān. No worldly trouble can cause a devotee to even slightly deviate from his mood of surrender (*śaraṇāgati*). He always accepts Lord Kṛṣṇa to be His guardian and protector.

Bhagavān witnesses everything; He is *sarva-draṣṭā*. The worldly vision of conditioned living entities is subject to various types of disturbances (*bādhās*). If we are dissatisfied with the arrangements and orders of Bhagavān, we just have to welcome inauspiciousness. A surrendered person is happy with His arrangements and orders; his only consideration is serving Him without interruption.

Question 301—Regarding what topics should we be diligent?

Answer—One should try to awaken the eternal function (*nitya-vṛtti*) of the soul and attain service to Bhagavān. One should always strive for service to Brajendra-nandana. Those who are blessed by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa have no wealth or shelter other than Him. If one is proud of high birth, wealth, mundane scholarship (*śruta* or *pāṇḍitya*), or beauty (*śrī*), one cannot receive His grace; one has to stay in the material world indefinitely.

When one is active in *śreyaḥ-panthā* (ultimately beneficial and auspicious path), one is not attracted to *preyaḥ-panthā* (path of short-term benefit with no ultimate auspiciousness). The wise accept *śreyaḥ-panthā* and worship Bhagavān in *sat-saṅga* (association of saintly persons) until death. All things

in the world belong to Bhagavān. We will experience great difficulty if we develop greed for worldly objects. Only those who are averse to hearing narrations of the pastimes of Bhagavān remain bound to the material world. They wander in the kingdom of mental illusion (*manoratha*) and fall in the pit of misfortune.

We have to become meek and humble, and leave aside the wicked thought: "I have become a Vaiṣṇava." We will have to pray for mercy and make efforts to attain service. We will attain service to Bhagavān only by the grace of Guru, Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān; then, there will be no more false ego. People who are subjugated by lust and anger become deceitful and hypocritical (*dāmbhika*), and in this condition they think that taking shelter of the lotus feet of a spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas is unnecessary. Due to this, the noose of bondage in material existence (*baddha-daśā*) becomes tighter.

We should be in the company of saintly persons (*sādhus*) all of the time. We cannot be saved without accepting saintly association (*sat-saṅga*). If due to anxiety we remain in a solitary place, aloof from saintly association, our wicked mentality of being the Lord will become stronger. We must be careful to be under the guidance of saintly persons and a spiritual master, and be obedient to them. Otherwise, we will experience great trouble. If a living entity is without shelter, the illusory potency of the Lord (*māyā*) captures him and forces him to wander as her slave throughout the universe.

Question 302—Is the mercy of a spiritual master (*guru-kṛpā*) the same as the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-kṛpā*)?

Answer—The mercy of a spiritual master and the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not different. A spiritual master (Gurudeva) does nothing other than devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, Lord Kṛṣṇa does not accept service from anyone other

than His beloved devotees (*preṣṭha-jana*). A spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa are attached to each other in love; both have the same soul, and both love the other more than their own lives. Śrī Gurudeva has love, affection, and devotion for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*), and Lord Kṛṣṇa has love, affection, and devotion for His devotee (*bhakta-bhakti*). Everyone offers his service to the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa only through the medium of a spiritual master. That spiritual master, who is worthy of constant service, is not an ordinary living entity residing in this material universe (*brahmāṇḍa*). A spiritual master appears in this material world by the desire of Lord Kṛṣṇa to deliver fallen living entities. He gives fortunate living entities instructions about serving Bhagavān. The mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa reaches us only through a spiritual master.

Question 303—What do devotees do when they experience hardship (*asuvidhā*)?

Answer—Bhagavān tests us by putting us into difficulty. Genuine servants of Bhagavān do not become agitated in any condition. They serve Bhagavān in all conditions with their body, mind, and words. Sense gratification on the material platform (*prākṛta-bhoga*) cannot touch them. They are always situated in service (*sevā*). They think: “Service is my life, service is my authority, service is the purpose of my spiritual existence (*sattā*), service is my work; everything other than service is death (*mṛtyu*) or material existence (*saṁsāra*).” [**Note:***jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’.* The living entity’s constitutional position is as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa.]

Question 304—Can anyone become a Vaiṣṇava (devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa)?

Answer—One does not become, nor can one be made, a Vaiṣṇava. Everyone in the whole world is

by nature a Vaiṣṇava or servant of Lord Viṣṇu. One can realize this nature (*svarūpa*) of the living entity in the association of saintly persons. [All beings are inherently Vaiṣṇavas; they are servants of Viṣṇu by nature. However, this can only be realized through association with saints (*sadhu-saṅga*).]

Question 305– When will I be able to go to Vraja?

Answer—The road to Vraja will be paved only when we consider Śrīla Gurudeva to be nondifferent from Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, who is the potency of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (*gaura-śakti*). If we start thinking that Śrīla Gurudeva is not identical with Śrīla Gadādhara Paṇḍita, we will face severe difficulty in our spiritual progress.

It is the prime duty of wise persons (*buddhimāna-jana*) to follow and learn from the activities of the *mahājanas* (great devotees). “I will measure the dimensions of, and understand, this material universe through knowledge acquired by my mundane senses”—this idea is rooted in *viśva-darśana* (seeing the material world as the object of one's sense gratification); this is the idea of material enjoyment (*bhoga*). By this, we get material existence and a perpetual journey in the cycle of birth and death (*saṁsāra*); we cannot go to Vraja. Seeing the material world as the object of one's personal sense gratification leads to serious difficulty in our spiritual journey. The worldview driven by the desire to dominate the world is the cause of our bondage. The very idea that the world should satisfy our senses is what gives rise to worldly existence.

Question 306—What is the mentality (*citta-vṛtti*) of fruitive workers (*karmīs*)?

Answer—The concern of an altruistic worker can be compared to the concern of one who sees a drowning man, but only wants to save his shoes and

shirt. In the religion of western countries, it is considered a great philanthropic activity to do a benevolent deed for the external covering of a person's soul, the material body. Many people wrongly think that to benefit a human being means to benefit his external covering or material body. The material body is the gross covering of the living entity (*jīvātmā*), and the mind (*mana*) is the subtle covering of the living entity. The human race considers the temporary and unreliable benefit of these two coverings of the soul to be real help. That is why one of our German devotees said, "If a man is drowning then let him drown; if his *ātma-vṛtti* (ability and inclination to engage in devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, which is the true nature of the soul) is degrading then let it degrade. 'Saving the shoes and shirt' of someone by satisfying his desires for sense gratification is regarded as true help by the so-called altruistic members of the sect of fruitive workers. This is indeed a matter of great sorrow."

Question 307—Are the associates (*saṅgīs*) and devotees (*bhaktas*) of Mahāprabhu the same?

Answer—No. *Saṅgīs* wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to Mahāprabhu and accompany Him everywhere. Those who do not continually associate with Him and do not wholeheartedly dedicate themselves to Him cannot be called *saṅgīs*; such persons may be *bhaktas* of Mahāprabhu. *Saṅgī* refers to a *pārṣada*, or eternal associate of Bhagavān. Although Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura did not appear in this world when Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was performing His manifest pastimes (*prakaṭa-līlā*), he is an eternal associate of Mahāprabhu because he appeared in this world to fulfill the innermost desire of Mahāprabhu's heart. He is always transcendentally intoxicated in the service of Mahāprabhu. He is always immersed in the mood of Mahāprabhu's heart. He nourishes the mood of intimacy (*viśrambha-*

bhāva). Thus, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura Mahāśaya is an eternally-perfected associate (*nitya-siddha*).

Question 308—In devotional practice, are the stages of *sādhana-kriyā* and *sādhana-bhakti* the same?

Answer—No. There is no effect of *sādhana-kriyā* on the soul. *Sādhana-kriyā* happens on the basis (*bhūmikā*) of *cid-ābhāsamana* (mind which is a semblance of transcendence). It is dependent on time (*kālādhīna*), and it removes one's aversion (*vaimukhya*) to Lord Hari. On the other hand, *sādhana-bhakti* is eternal (*nitya*) in nature. Thus, *sādhana-kriyā* and *sādhana-bhakti (śuddha-bhakti)* are different. *Sādhana-kriyā* includes all of the limbs of devotional service (*bhakti*) in which one endeavors to eliminate unwanted habits (*anarthas*). When the unwanted habits are gone, *sevā-vṛtti* (propensity to serve), *śuddha-bhakti* (pure devotion), and *sādhana-bhakti* (devotional practice) automatically manifest.

Sādhana-kriyā does not act on the soul (*ātmā*), whereas *sādhana-bhakti* always acts on the platform of the soul. *Sādhana-kriyā* only acts on the *cid-ābhāsa mana*, never on the soul. The function or nature of the soul (*ātma-dharma*) is devotional service. *Sādhana* is meant for controlling the mind. The function of the soul (*ātma-vṛtti*) develops once one has controlled *mano-dharma*, the tendency of the mind to speculate. When *sādhana-bhakti* manifests in *ātma-vṛtti*, a living entity (*jīva*) eventually becomes situated in *bhāva-bhakti* (initial stage of devotional perfection) and *prema-bhakti* (mature stage of *bhakti* characterized by divine love or *prema*). Only in the fully-ripened stage of *sādhana-bhakti* will *bhāva-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti* gradually manifest, just as a mango passes through the three stages of unripe, partially ripe, and fully ripe. Thus, *sādhana-kriyā* is not the same for everyone (not *jātīya-vastu*). The inability

to understand the relationship and difference between *sādhana-bhakti* and *sādhana-kriyā* has caused, and is still causing, various types of quarrels.

Question 309—How do we differ from a spiritual master (Guru)?

Answer—I am smaller than the smallest, and Gurudeva, who always serves the *bṛhat* (Bhagavān), is greater than the greatest.

Question 310—If a devotee takes birth in a family lineage, does that lineage become auspicious?

Answer—One-hundred future and past generations of a family are delivered when a *mahā-bhāgavata* (pure devotee of the Supreme Lord who is in the highest stage of devotional life) takes birth in that family. If a *madhyama-bhāgavata* (devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the intermediate stage of *bhakti* who worships the Lord with firm faith, makes friends with His devotees, preaches to the innocent, and avoids atheists) appears in a family, fourteen future and past generations become elevated in spiritual life. If a *kaniṣṭha-bhāgavata* (neophyte devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa) appears in a family, three future and past generations are elevated.

Question 311—Why do some devotees take birth in a lower-class family? If devotees do not have to suffer reactions from past actions (*karma-phala*), why do they sometimes appear to be foolish or diseased?

Answer—Devotees are never bound to suffer from reactions to past actions. All of their pastimes, including being born, take place according to the desire of Bhagavān. One can see that sometimes devotees take birth in a lower, poor, or fallen family (*nīca-kula*). To ordinary eyes, they appear to be diseased or foolish. However, there is always a higher

purpose behind this. Ordinary people will become discouraged if they see that devotees of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-bhaktas*) only appear in a higher, aristocratic family lineage, or that devotees always have exceptional strength or worldly scholarship. Thus, merciful Bhagavān arranges for His devotees to take birth in various conditions in order to bestow auspiciousness and mercy upon all classes of people. One should understand this to be exactly like catching a wild male elephant by utilizing a trained female elephant. Śrī Vṛndāvana-dāsa Ṭhākura said:

śocya-deśe śocya-kule āpana samāna
janmāiyā vaiṣṇava sabāre karena trāṇa
jei deśe jei kule vaiṣṇava avatare
tāṅhāra prabhāve lakṣa yojana nistare
jata dekha vaiṣṇavera vyavahāra-dukha
niścaya jāniha seī parānanda-sukha
viṣaya-madāndha saba kichui nā jāne
vidyā-dhana-kula made vaiṣṇava nā cina

Meaning: a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇava) is actually as good as Lord Kṛṣṇa qualitatively. However, Bhagavān may arrange for him to take birth in a deplorable country or in a fallen family lineage. In this clever and hidden way, He delivers all of the living entities. Everyone within one-hundred-thousand *yojanas* (eight–hundred-thousand miles) is delivered by the influence of a Vaiṣṇava who appears in a particular country or family lineage. Although such a devotee may seem to be externally suffering from worldly distress, internally he is always immersed in the topmost bliss. Those who are blinded by the spell of material sense objects and pleasures cannot understand this. They cannot recognize Vaiṣṇavas due to their false pride in mundane education, wealth, or aristocratic family lineage.

If devotees of Bhagavān appear in a lower or fallen family lineage, one should not think that they have been subjected to *pāpa-yoni*, low birth in a sinful species. That is, one should not think that they have

taken birth in an insignificant *śudra* or working class family, for example, as a result of misdeeds in past lives. Rather, one should understand that such devotees take birth in a lower-class family lineage to purify that lineage. Congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*) is the only means to attain perfection in the age of Kali. Any virtuous person who achieves perfection in this process of congregational chanting is certainly great.

Question 312—Is where *hari-kīrtana* is taking place the *dhāma* (holy abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa)?

Answer—I consider that wherever devotees of Bhagavān continually perform *kīrtana* (loud glorification) and discuss Bhagavān's pastimes is nothing but the holy abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-dhāma*). All of those places are the *cid-vilāsa-kṣetra* (sacred places of transcendental pleasure-pastimes) of the eternal abode (*nitya-dhāma*). The heart of every living entity, and indeed every atom or molecule, is a place where Śrī Viṣṇu resides. In other words, He is present in the heart of all living entities and in all atomic and subatomic particles. Therefore, *śrī-dhāma* is everywhere. One will have such vision the very day the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva (spiritual master) manifests in one's heart.

Question 313—Is Śrī Caitanya-deva directly Bhagavān?

Answer—Certainly. Śrī Caitanya-candra is also directly the Supreme Lord (Parameśvara). Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu is the complete *cetana-vastu* (fully conscious Śrī Bhagavān) and *vibhu-caitanya vastu* (Almighty having the greatest consciousness). He is Svayaṁ-Bhagavān, the original Supreme Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Although the word 'Bhagavān' applies to any incarnation of the Lord, 'Svayaṁ Bhagavān' refers specifically to the original form of the Lord, Śrī

Kṛṣṇa, who is the source of all incarnations. He is the Lord of lords, the Supreme Lord. Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura, an eternally perfect associate of Bhagavān, has sung:

brajendra-nandana jei śacī-suta haila
seī balarāma haila nitāī

In other words, Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself became the son of Mother Śacī, and Balarāma became Nitāi.

The scriptures state:

svayaṁ bhagavān kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa para-tattva
pūrṇa-jñāna pūrṇānanda parama-mahattva
nanda-suta bali' jāṅre bhāgavate gāya
sei kṛṣṇa avatīrṇa caitanya gosāñi
svayaṁ bhagavān kṛṣṇa kṛṣṇa sarvāśraya
parama īśvara kṛṣṇa sarva-śāstra kaya
seī kṛṣṇa avatārī brajendra-kumāra
āpane caitanya-rūpe kaila avatāra

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

In other words, Kṛṣṇa is Svayaṁ Bhagavān, the original Supreme Lord. He is *para-tattva* (Supreme Truth). He is the embodiment of complete knowledge (*pūrṇa-jñāna*) and complete bliss (*pūrṇa-ānanda*). He is the Supreme Transcendence (*parama-mahattva*). That same Kṛṣṇa whom *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* describes as the son of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja (Nanda-nandana) descended to Earth as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. All of the scriptures state that Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord and shelter of everyone. That Vrajendra-kumāra Kṛṣṇa, the source of all incarnations (*avatārī*), personally appeared in the form of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. We are servants of Bhagavān; our eternal duty is to serve Him. In the age of Kali, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra Himself appeared as Śrī Gaurāṅga. Therefore, Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is indeed an eternal object of worship and reverence (*nitya-upāsya* and *nitya-ārādhya-vastu*) for all of us residents of *Kali-yuga*. Those who do not worship Śrī Caitanya-candra,

who is directly Bhagavān, are certainly senseless. Those who have not worshiped the most munificent Śrī Caitanya-candra can never attain transcendental consciousness and spiritual intelligence (*caitanya*).

Śrī Caitanya-candra is the complete Supreme Personality who has sixteen digits (*kalās*). When narrations of His distinguished spiritual pastimes enter the heart of a living entity, certainly those narrations fully attract the living entity to His lotus feet. Those who have partially heard those narrations (*kathā*) partially dedicate themselves to His lotus feet. If a living entity (*jīva*) is not busily serving Śrī Caitanya-candra with all of his possessions (*sarvasva*), including body (*deha*), mind (*mana*), children (*putra*), spouse (*patnī*), and words (*vākya*), it should be understood that he has not yet truly and fully heard narrations of the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya-deva.

Śrī Gaura-sundara is the transcendental Supreme Personality of Godhead who exists in the past, present, and future. He is the combined form (*milita-tanu*) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda. Although He is directly Śrī Kṛṣṇa, He became immersed in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and He performed the pastime of being a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa in order to bestow auspiciousness upon the entire world. Out of ignorance, some consider Him to be a great personality (*mahā-puruṣa*) or preacher (*pracāraka*), but this is not the case. He is directly Vrajendra-nandana Kṛṣṇa Himself who has become Śrī Śacī-nandana, the son of Mother Śacī-devī. Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is Śrī Jagannātha Miśra's son (*nandana*). The word *nandana* implies that Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva increases Śrī Jagannātha Miśra's bliss. Śrī Jagannātha Miśra is His servant in the form of His father.

Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is the source of all incarnations (*avatārī*) and the embodiment of *sat* (eternal existence), *cit* (full spiritual consciousness),

and *ānanda* (spiritual bliss) (*sac-cid-ānanda vigraha*). He is the summum bonum (*asamordhva-vastu*). All other incarnations (*avatāra-gaṇa*) manifest from Him only. He is the ultimate limit (*parākāṣṭhā*) of the Supreme Absolute Reality (*para-tattva*). He is Svayaṁ Bhagavān, the original Supreme Personality of Godhead. He is Svayaṁ-rūpa Bhagavān, the Supreme Lord in His original personal form. He is *mūla* Bhagavān or *aṁśī* Bhagavān, the source of all expansions. No one is equal to or greater than Him. Although Śrī Gaurasundara is Śrī Brajendra-nandana, He has the mood of separation (*vipralambha*). **Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *sambhoga-maya-vigraha* (in the mood of conjugal love in meeting), and Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is *vipralambha-maya-vigraha* (in the mood of conjugal love in separation). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *mādhurya-vigraha*, the embodiment of human-like sweetness, and Śrī Gaurāṅga-sundara is *audārya-vigraha*, the embodiment of infinite magnanimity, compassion, and kindness.**

Question 314—What type of mercy did Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva give?

Answer—Śrī Gaurasundara said that *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkrītana* (loud glorification of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa) is the only duty of the human species (*mānava-jāti*). This is His kind, magnanimous nature (*mahā-vadānyatā* or *mahā-dayālutā*). A living entity (*jīva*) can attain *vraja-prema* (love for Kṛṣṇa of the *Vrajavāsīs*, the inhabitants of Vraja) only through *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana.* This *vraja-prema* is unattainable (*duṣprāpya*) for great demigods and even for Uddhava, who is the best of devotees. It is inconceivable (*agamya*) for great devotees like Nārada.

Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva is not a follower of the philosophy of synthesis or syncretism (*samanvaya-vādī*), which cheats people. [**Note:** *samanvaya-vāda* or syncretism is a fusion of different beliefs, an

attempt to bring together different schools of thought or intellectual traditions. A syncretist attempts to unite principles or parties which are actually irreconcilable.] He only spoke about the topic that will bring the topmost auspiciousness to living entities. The words of Śrī Caitanyadeva make the words of others, even those considered to be great, seem incomplete and insignificant. Those who belong to mentally-concocted disciplic successions (*mano-dharmī sampradāyas*) have taken shelter of cheating (*vañcanā-praṇālī*), and they present less important spiritual practices (*sādhana-praṇālīs*) to be the most important ones. Gaura-sundara did not come to cheat us in this manner. *Sādhana* (spiritual practice) that is, or will be, imagined in the so-called *sampradāyas* is insignificant and full of deception. Śrī Gaura-sundara revealed this to the world via *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Moreover, He showed that *saṅkīrtana* of the holy name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only means of bestowing auspiciousness on the entire world; thus, one should engage in *kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*. Loud singing or *kīrtana* done to please oneself or others is not *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. Loud singing or *kīrtana* done to secure amenity or comfort for oneself or others is not *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana.*

The holy name of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa is directly Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself. In other words, the syllables of the holy name (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-akṣara*) are non-different from Him (*kṛṣṇa-vastu*). Loudly glorifying Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*) takes away the weak-mindedness (*durbuddhi*) of *nirviśeṣa-vādīs* (those who say that the Lord is devoid of personal qualities, and that merging into undifferentiated *brahma* is the ultimate spiritual perfection), and the atheism (*nāstikatā*) of atheists (*nāstika*), and they are actually liberated. Prakāśānanda Sarasvatī, who was the leader of thousands of staunch monists and impersonalist (*māyāvādī*) *sannyāsīs*, serves as evidence for the efficacy of *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. One who is very much attached to sense objects and bodily comforts

(*viṣayas*) can also attain genuine liberation and auspiciousness through *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*; Pratāpa-rudra Mahārāja, who was the emperor of Utkala (Odisha or Orissa), is evidence for this. **Not only men and women, but also other living entities such as trees, stones, birds, and tigers are liberated by *kīrtana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names.** The trees, creepers, animals, and birds in the forest of *Jhāri-khaṇḍa* are examples of this. The loud *kīrtana* of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu on His way to visit Śrī Vṛndāvana *dhāma* liberated all of the living entities in that forest. [**Note:** a *jīva* whose consciousness is covered by intense lust, like an embryo is covered by the womb, possesses completely covered consciousness (*ācchādita-cetana*). Trees, creepers, shrubs, stones, and other non-moving beings have such consciousness; they are non-moving in nature because their consciousness is fully covered.] If pure *kīrtana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names is not taking place, a living entity cannot be actually liberated. Śrī Gaura-sundara descended to this world to give auspiciousness to all living entities, including animals (*paśu*), birds (*pakṣī*), and human beings (*mānava*).

Only by *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* can we very easily get all facilities. Only by *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* can we attain *kṛṣṇa-prema* (unalloyed love for Lord Kṛṣṇa), which is the most beneficial and auspicious goal of human life. The final conclusion of writing, studying, and scholarship is *Śrī Hari-nāma-saṅkīrtana*, the loud congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Hari.

Kīrtana performed for the satisfaction of Bhagavān is real *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*. When one imitates *kīrtana* for one's personal happiness, it is not real *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana*, but *kīrtana* of *māyā*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Just as one can know the cause (*kāraṇa*) by observing the action (*kārya*), one can know if someone is truly chanting *hari-nāma* by observing the results. **If someone is chanting the**

holy name of Lord Hari and his attachment and addiction to the material world is increasing, it is clear that the subject (*viṣaya*) that he is glorifying is not actually the holy name of Lord Hari. If one truly engages in *śrī-nāma-kīrtana*, one's attachment to the material world (*saṁsāra*) gradually goes away because one realizes its futility (*tucchatva*) and insignificance (*asāratva*). One will not be attracted to the material world anymore; his consciousness will be clean and steady, his mind will not be restless or distressed, and he will attain love of Godhead (*prema*) and eternal peace. If this is not happening, one should consider: "What am I doing wrong?" *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* states:

śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya dayā karaha vicāra
vicāra karile citte pābe camatkāra
eka kṛṣṇa-nāme kare sarva-pāpa nāśa
premera kāraṇa bhakti karena prakāśa
anāyāse bhava-kṣaya, kṛṣṇera sevana
eka kṛṣṇa-nāmera phale pāi eta dhana
harṣe prabhu kahena—śuna svarūpa-rāma-rāya
nāma-saṅkīrtana kalau parama upāya
saṅkīrtana-yajñe kalau kṛṣṇa-ārādhana
sei ta' sumedhā pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa
nāma-saṅkīrtane haya sarvānartha nāśa
sarva-śubhodaya kṛṣṇa-premera ullāsa
saṅkīrtana haite pāpa saṁsāra nāśana
citta-śuddhi, sarva-bhakti-sādhana udagama
kṛṣṇa-premodgama, premāmṛta-āsvādana
kṛṣṇa-prāpti sevāmṛta-samudre majjana

In other words, you will be wonder-struck when you think about the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa-caitanya Mahāprabhu. One holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*) destroys all sins and manifests devotional service (*bhakti*), which is the cause of love of Godhead. This very easily eliminates the bondage of material existence (*saṁsāra-bandhana*) of a devotee, and he attains service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*). One receives so much wealth as a result of chanting

even one holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrīman Mahāprabhu joyfully said, “O Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāma Rāya! *Nāma-saṅkīrtana* is the topmost means of deliverance in the iron age of quarrel and hypocrisy (*kali-yuga*).” Lord Kṛṣṇa is worshiped by *saṅkīrtana-yajña* in the age of Kali. One who knows this and acts according to this instruction of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu indeed has the highest intelligence (*sumedhā*), and he alone can attain the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. All unwanted habits (*anarthas*) are eliminated by *nāma-saṅkīrtana*; moreover, one attains all types of auspiciousness, one attains the joy (*ullāsa*) of love of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*), and one's sins (*pāpa*) and bondage to material existence (*saṁsāra-bandhana*) are eliminated. When one performs congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, one's heart (*citta*) is cleansed; one automatically receives the benefit of following all of the limbs of devotional service (*bhakti*); one attains love for Lord Kṛṣṇa; one relishes the nectar of love (*prema-amṛta*); one attains Lord Kṛṣṇa; and one is immersed in the nectarean ocean of devotional service (*sevāmṛta-samudra*). [**Note:** Śrī Gaurasundara is served and worshiped only through *nāma-saṅkīrtana*. This service is the most powerful of the nine limbs of *bhakti*, and all of the other limbs are included in it. Other forms of *sādhana* need not be performed separately during *kīrtana*; *kīrtana* is sufficient in itself. That is, *arcana*, *smaraṇa*, and other practices are nourished solely through *kīrtana*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is actually served by *saṅkīrtana*, as established by *pañca-tattva-ātmaka* Śrī Gaurasundara. Śrīman Mahāprabhu and His associates gathered together and showed through śrī-*kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana* how we should serve and worship the Lord. *Pañca-tattva-ātmaka* Śrī Gaurasundara means Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His five features, as *bhakta-rūpa*, the form of a devotee (Caitanya Mahāprabhu); *bhakta-svarūpa*, the

expansion of a devotee (Nityānanda Prabhu); *bhakta-āvatāra*, the incarnation of a devotee (Śrī Advaita); *bhakta*, a pure devotee (Śrī Śrīvāsa); and *bhakta-śakti*, the devotional energy (Śrī Gadādhara).]

Question 315—What are the distinctive features (*vaiśiṣṭya*) of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*) and Lord Gaurāṅga (*gaura-nāma*)?

Answer—It is not possible to chant the transcendental (*aprākṛta*) holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*) in a state of consciousness that is full of unwanted habits (*anartha-yukta avasthā*). Offenses are considered in chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa; however, there is no such consideration in chanting the holy names of Lord Gaurāṅga and Lord Nityānanda. A living entity may be full of unwanted habits (*anarthas*), but if he chants the holy names of Lord Gaurāṅga and Lord Nityānanda with sincerity and without duplicity (*niṣkapaṭatā*), and with an understanding of Their positions as the Supreme Personalities of Godhead, his *anarthas* will be removed by Their mercy.

The scriptures state:

kṛṣṇa-nāma kare aparādhera vicāra
kṛṣṇa balile aparādhīra nā haya vikāra
caitanya nityānande nāhi e saba vicāra
nāma laite prema dena, bahe aśru-dhāra
svatantra īśvara prabhu atyanta udāra
tāre nā bhajile kabhu nā haya nistāra

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

Meaning: Offense is considered in chanting Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy names. If an offensive person chants, he will not experience ecstatic bodily transformations. However, there is no such consideration in chanting the holy names of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda. When one chants Their names, They immediately bestow love for Lord Kṛṣṇa, and streams of tears flow from one’s eyes. Śrī

Caitanya Mahāprabhu is the independent Lord (*svatantra-īśvara*), and He is very munificent (*atyanta-udāra*). If one does not engage in devotional service (*bhajana*) to Him, one will never be delivered.

Question 316—What is the perspective (*vicāra*) of Vaiṣṇavas (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa)?

Answer—Vaiṣṇavas or devotees of Lord Viṣṇu do not regard a spiritual master (*guru*) or a disciple (*śiṣya*) to be an object of their enjoyment. They always serve Lord Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of a spiritual master. They are happy when they see things being engaged in serving their Lord. A disciple dedicated to his spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha śiṣya*) only desires to serve him; he has no desire for personal sense gratification (*ātmendriya tṛpti-vāñchā*). We should understand that genuine devotional service to a spiritual master (*yathārtha guru-bhakti*) is not taking place where conduct opposed to this principle is occurring. *Jagad-guru* (spiritual preceptor of the whole world) Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states the following about the ideal of devotional service to a spiritual master (*guru-sevā*) in the commentary to verse 4.28.34 of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavātam*: ***guroḥ sevāyāṁ pravṛttaḥ śiṣyaḥ śravaṇa-kīrttanādīnyapi bhogān tadutthān premānandān-api gṛhāna taducita-vivikta-sthalam-api naivāpekṣata. śrī-guru-sevayaiva sukhena sarva-sādhya-siddhyartham-ityupadeśo vyañjitaḥ.***

Disciples who are busy serving their spiritual master do not aspire to get happiness from their service of hearing (*śravaṇa*) and chanting (*kīrtana*) the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In other words, they do not want *prema-ānanda* (bliss of spiritual love) or *nirjana-bhajana-ānanda* (bliss of devotional service in a solitary place) from hearing and chanting the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa. They have no desire to live in a solitary place which

would make attaining *prema-ānanda* or *nirjana-bhajana-ānanda* possible, because they easily attain all of the goals of human life (*arthas*) just by serving their spiritual master.

Question 317—What is an *anartha* (unwanted habit)?

Answer—*Anartha* is 'not *artha*' or 'not *paramārtha*.' In other words, *anartha* is an antonym of the words *artha* and *paramārtha*. Any unwanted desire which is not helpful in achieving love for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*), the highest goal of human life, is indeed an *anartha*. *Anarthas* include desires other than the desire to serve Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa (*anya-abhilāṣa*), desire for mundane religiosity (*dharma*), desire for sense gratification (*kāma*), desire for economic development (*artha*), desire for liberation (*mokṣa*), desire for wealth (*kanaka*), desire for beautiful partner (*kāminī*), desire for prestige (*pratiṣṭhā*), and desire for one's happiness (*sukha*). All such *anarthas* gradually go away when one glorifies the holy name of Lord Hari (*hari-nāma*). *Anarthas* reflect the desire of a living entity to satisfy his own senses (*indriya-tarpaṇa-icchā*). This desire is the primary (*pradhāna*) obstacle to serving Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevā*). Thus, *anarthas* hinder one from continuously remembering Lord Kṛṣṇa. This may lead to an inclination to abandon Lord Kṛṣṇa and pursue material, illusory (*māyika*) things for the purpose of getting sense gratification.

Question 318—How do devotees view the material world?

Answer—A *mahā-bhāgavata* (pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa) sees the whole world as the mercy of Bhagavān. This material world is the embodiment of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's mercy for the conditioned living entities, and it is therefore worthy of service by them. One should render service to this world, which is the

embodiment of Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy, by preaching His glories. One should not claim proprietorship or rulership over this material world, which is the manifest form of Lord Kṛṣṇa's grace and an opportunity given to the conditioned living entities to go back home, back to Godhead. One will surely get punishment and misery if one tries to enjoy this material world, which is meant for Bhagavān's enjoyment, and which is a manifestation of His grace.

Question 319—How can we get Bhagavān's mercy?

Answer—We cannot bypass the genuine servants of Lord Hari (*hari-sevakas*) who are continuously serving Him (*hari-sevā*). We can get the mercy of Bhagavān only when we do not try to bypass them, and instead we become their followers. **One gets the mercy of Lord Hari through the mercy of His devotees (*hari-bhaktas*). Living entities cannot attain auspiciousness without the mercy of a devotee of Lord Hari.**

Question 320—From whom does Bhagavān accept food offerings?

Answer—Bhagavān only eats food offered by those who are qualified to call and feed Him. Not everyone can call Him, so how can such a person feed Him?

Bhagavān does not accept food (*naivedya*) offered by a nondevotee, even if he is a scholar and the food is offered with *mantras*. The love and affection of Bhagavān are not attracted to ordinary food such as cooked *aravā* (raw) rice laden with ghee (clarified butter), and various types of delicacies. However, Śrī Bhagavān will lovingly accept whatever kind of cooked grains are offered by a mendicant (*bhiṣkuka*) who is eager to serve Him.

[Note: Aravā (अरवा) and Usanā (उसना) are terms used in India to describe two different types of

rice based on their processing methods.

1. Aravā Rice (अरवा चावल)

Meaning: This is raw rice, which means it is simply harvested, cleaned, and milled to remove the outer husk. It has not been boiled or parboiled before milling.

Characteristics: Aravā rice retains more of its natural flavor and is quicker to cook than parboiled rice. It is commonly used for dishes that require a softer, less firm texture.

Usage: It is often used in Indian dishes like *pulāva*, *khichrī*, or as regular steamed rice.

2. Usanā Rice (उसना चावल)

Meaning: This is parboiled rice, meaning it has been partially boiled (parboiled) in the husk before milling.

Characteristics: Usanā rice is firmer, less sticky, and has a distinct flavor compared to Aravā rice. Parboiling also makes it more nutritious, as the nutrients from the husk are absorbed into the grain during the parboiling process.

Usage: Usanā rice is more commonly used in South Indian cuisine and is preferred for dishes where firmer, separate grains are desired.

In summary:

Aravā (अरवा) = Raw Rice.
Usanā (उसना) = Parboiled Rice.]

Question 321—Why do we have no faith in *Vaikuṇṭha-vastu* (things of the transcendental or divine realm of Lord Nārāyāṇa)? [Note: Vaikuṇṭha literally means 'the place with no anxiety.']

Answer—Only the most sinful persons (*mahā-pāpī vyakti*) have no faith in *Vaikuṇṭha-vastu*. A heart that is contaminated with sin (*pāpa-malina citta*) cannot establish faith in pure things (*nirmala-vastu*). Therefore, the *Mahā-bhārata* and *Skanda-Purāṇa* state:

mahā-prasāde govinde nāma-brahmaṇi vaiṣṇave

svalpa-puṇyavatāṁ rājan viśvāso naiva jāyate

Neither those with a small amount of accrued pious merit (*puṇya*) nor those with a great amount of sin (*pāpa*) can develop faith in the four Brahman (transcendental) substances: (1) *anna-brahma* or *mahā-prasāda*, which literally means 'great mercy,' especially refers to sanctified food offered to the Deity, (2) *śilā-brahma* or *kāṣṭha-brahma* (Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa) [**Note:** Lord Jagannātha is the Supreme Lord Himself in the form of wood (*kāṣtha*). Śrī Rādhāramaṇa and Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govindadeva are the Supreme Lord Himself in the form of stone (*śilā*).], (3) *śabda-brahma* (sound *avatāra* of *parabrahma*, especially the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa), and (4) *nara-brahma* (the spiritual master and Vaiṣṇavas or devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa).

In present times, we have lost faith in these Vaiṣṇava *vastus* (substances); therefore, unwanted desires (*anarthas*) have devoured us. *Mahā-prasāda*, Govinda, *kṛṣṇa-nāma* (holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa), and Guru (spiritual master) are the four *viṣṇu-vastus* (substances connected to Lord Viṣṇu). Unfortunately, we have lost faith in these in this material world of the illusory potency, *māyā*. *Mīyate anayā iti māyā—māyā* is that by which things can be measured, and these four transcendental substances cannot be measured.

Śrī Govinda is the self-effulgent, transcendental substance. No other light is needed to see Him. ***Gāṁ vindati iti govindaḥ***—Lord Kṛṣṇa is known as Govinda because He derives joy by protecting and serving cows (*go-gaṇa*), cowherd boys (*gopas*), cowherd damsels (*gopīs*), and *goṣṭha* or *Vraja-bhūmi*, the land of Vraja where Lord Kṛṣṇa eternally resides. Adhokṣaja Govinda, who is beyond material sense perception, is not a concoction of human mind. Śrī Govinda is not an imaginary or fictitious personality. Śrī Govinda Himself is the only *adhokṣaja-vastu* (Supreme Personality of Godhead who is beyond material sense perception) and

parātpara-vastu (most superior Supreme Being). A spiritual master, who is the king of the devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*vaiṣṇava-rāja*), who gives transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*), and who is the most beneficial personality, tells us about Govinda, who is the Absolute Truth.

Śrī Govinda is the personal embodiment of unalloyed, unlimited transcendental bliss (*avimiśrita-paramānanda-vigraha*). Whatever appears to be true to us according to our mundane knowledge (*akṣaja-jñāna*) is apparent truth or local truth [relative truth]; it cannot be positive or absolute truth. The material world was created for those who have been averse to serving Govinda (*govinda-sevā*) since time without beginning.

Question 322—What is *sevā* (service)?

Answer—Whatever activity one does that gives happiness to Ṭhākura (Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and any activity that gives pleasure to Bhagavān Śrī Hari is *sevā*. Whatever activity one does that is meant for one's personal happiness and comfort is *bhoga* (sense enjoyment).

Deceivers worship the Deity with sixteen types of paraphernalia to obtain children and grandchildren; their only motive (*uddeśya*) is to get favors from Lord Kṛṣṇa in return for service to His Deity form. This cannot be called *sevā*. What deception is not going on in the world in the name of *ṭhākura-pūjā* (Deity worship) and *nāma-ārādhanā* (worship of the holy name)? [**Note:** worship of Śrī Bhagavān with sixteen articles is called *ṣoḍaśopacāra-pūjana*. The sixteen items are: (1) a sitting place (*āsana*), (2) a welcome or invitation to the Deity (*svāgata*), (3) water to be sipped for purification (*ācamana*), (4) water for washing the feet of the Deity (*pādya*), (5) water for washing the Deity’s mouth (*arghya*), (6) an oblation of honey, ghee, milk, yoghurt, and jaggery all mixed together (*madhu-parka*), (7) more water to be sipped

again for purification (*ācamanīya*), (8) a vessel for bathing the Deity (*snāna*), (9) clothes (*vasana*), (10) ornaments (*ābharaṇa*), (11) sweet scents (*gandha*), (12) flowers (*puṣpa*), (13) a lamp (*dīpa*), (14) incense (*dhūpa*), (15) eatables (*naivedya*), and (16) sandalwood (*candana*).]

Serving Bhagavān and imitating such service (*abhinaya*) are very different things. We should make a special endeavor to ensure that service to the Deity of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-arcā-mūrti*) is performed properly. Not everyone can serve the Deity of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-vigraha*). One cannot actually chant the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa simply by donating twenty rupees. One cannot buy the eloquence to speak *hari-kathā* (topics of Lord Hari) with fifty rupees. Giving money does not lead to *pāṭha*, or actual recitation of the scriptures; it may result in one being able to use ornamental language (*bhāṣā-vinyāsa*), or to entertain others and gain popularity (*loka-rañjaka āmoda-pramoda*). This is not *bhakti* (devotional service) or *vaiṣṇava-dharma* (Vaiṣṇava religion which aims for love of Kṛṣṇa); it is *bhoga* (material enjoyment) or *karma-kāṇḍa* (seeking material benefits, liberation, or mundane piety). A *devala-brāhmaṇa* worth ten rupees, who gets paid to worship Deities in order to make a living, cannot actually serve the Supreme Lord or His Deity.

We cannot attain auspiciousness as long as we do not develop firm confidence that service to Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavas is the best and highest activity.

Question 323—What type of *dharma* (religious principle) is *prīti* (love)?

Answer—The *dharma* of love and the *dharma* of that which is not love (enmity, *aprīti*) are not the same. *Ātma-dharma*, the natural devotional inclination of the soul, is *prema-dharma* (characteristic of love of Godhead) and *prīti-dharma* (religious principle of love). On the other hand, *aprīti-*

dharma (principle of enmity) is *mano-dharma*, a function of the material mind, as are thought, judgment, imagination, and memory. [**Note:***mano-dharma* means mental concoction or speculation. It means that one moment you accept something as 'good,' and the next moment you reject it as 'bad.' This is what is going on in the material world. Therefore, we have taken the vow that, "Whatever Kṛṣṇa has said is good, and everything else is bad." Thus, our confusion is finished. Due to *mano-dharma*, we imagine that we have many duties in this world. However, our only duty or *ātma-dharma* is to surrender to Lord Kṛṣṇa.] There is no conflict within *prema-dharma*, *bhakti-dharma* (religious principle of devotional service), *parama-dharma* (topmost religious principle), *bhāgavata-dharma* (religious principle as taught by *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* and pure devotees like Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī), and *bhagavat-sevā-dharma* (religious principle of unalloyed service to Bhagavān). Harmony (*aikyātana*) is enshrined in these. If we abandon the religious principle of love, we develop the mood of sense enjoyment (*bhoga-buddhi*) towards each other. All of mankind (*mānava-jāti*) are servants (*sevakas*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. When one understands this, one no longer experiences any type of trouble or worry. Then a living entity can realize himself to be a Vaiṣṇava (devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa), and only then will natural love between one Vaiṣṇava and another arise. In this material world, *prīti-dharma* is absent; only religious principle that includes contradiction, conflict, and disharmony (*virodhamaya-saṅgharṣa-dharma*) is present.

Question 324—What is the ultimate goal of living entities?

Answer—Sense gratification (*bhukti*) or liberation (*mukti*) cannot be the ultimate goal of human life. Living entities are indeed servants of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, devotional service to

Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhakti*) is the ultimate goal of life. Liberation is actually just the other side of sense gratification. The desire for sense gratification and the desire for liberation are both like a female ghost (*piśācī*); they derail living entities from the path of theism (*āstikatā*). Therefore, saintly persons, who have deep faith in Bhagavān and theists, never accept these two witches of desire for sense gratification and desire for liberation. Devotees of Bhagavān are liberated, and liberated personalities do not hanker for liberation. One should abandon both sense gratification (*bhoga*) and renunciation (*tyāga*), and only accept devotional service.

Question 325—Religious principles (*dharma*) conceived in the human mind do not apply to *ātma-dharma*, the natural devotional inclination of the soul. What is your opinion about this?

Answer—Everything other than *sanātana-dharma* as described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and *bhāgavata-dharma* as described by Śrī Caitanyadeva, falls under the category of religious principles created by fallible human beings (*manuṣya-jñāna-prasūta dharmas*). Such artificial religious principles are full of mental concoction (*kalpanā*) and deception (*vañcanā*). *Bhāgavata-dharma*, or the pure *ātma-dharma* propagated by Śrī Caitanya-deva, is the only religious principle that is devoid of deception (*projjhita-kaitava-dharma*). It is the eternal religious principle based on the Vedic knowledge (*sanātana-śrauta-dharma*) that is sanctioned and practiced by saintly persons who have no envy (*nirmatsara-sādhus*). All of the religious paths (*dharmas*) prevalent nowadays are concoctions of the human mind (*mano-dharmas*); none is *ātma-dharma*. The scriptures tell us:

caitanya-gosāñi yei kahe, sei mata sāra
āra yata mata, sei saba chāra-khāra

(*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

Meaning: Śrī Caitanya-deva's explanations of the *Vedānta-sūtra* and other Vedic scriptures are perfect and best. All opinions other than His on interpreting the *Vedānta-sūtra* are simply bogus and corrupt.

Ātma-dharma is *nitya-vastu* (eternal substance). The soul (*ātmā*) is eternal; its religious principles are also eternal. Bona fide religious principles are initiated and established by the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself. No one except for the *dvādaśa mahājanas* knows about that *ātma-dharma*. Therefore, only those who follow in their footsteps know, and will continue to know in future, about *ātma-dharma*. How could eternal religious principles be created by mortal human beings? [**Note—**the *dvādaśa mahājanas* are Svayambhū or Lord Brahmā, Nārada, Śambhu or Lord Śiva, Kumāra, Kapila, Manu, Prahlāda, Janaka, Bhīṣma, Bali, Vaiyāsaki, or Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and Yamarāja. They are twelve great, self-realized souls who are authorized agents of the Lord. Their duty is to preach the cult of devotional service to people in general. They understand the Absolute Truth, and throughout their lives they exhibited the behavior of pure devotees.]

Question 326—Is a neophyte devotee (*kaniṣṭha-adhikārī-bhakta*) superior to a fruitive worker (*karmī*) and a philosophical speculator (*jñānī*)?

Answer—Certainly. Even the most neophyte devotee is very fortunate because he has accepted the path of devotional service, which is indeed the path of auspiciousness. The *karmīs* and *jñānīs* do not have such good fortune (*saubhāgya*). Living entities achieve the topmost auspiciousness by serving the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa, serving a spiritual master, and serving devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Caitanya-deva

said, “Indeed, the most excellent person is he who even once utters the name of Lord Kṛṣṇa with a tongue that is eager to render devotional service.”

A materialistic person in the material world ruled by Goddess Durgā (*devī-dhāma*) may be the best *puṇya-karmī* (one engaged in mundane pious activities) or best *jñānī* (one cultivating knowledge by philosophical speculation), but such a person is inferior to a neophyte devotee who worships the Deity of Śrī Viṣṇu with *mantras* consisting of the holy names of Lord Viṣṇu. This is because even great *karmīs* and *jñānīs* lack the conviction and faith that Lord Viṣṇu is the only real substance, and that He is worthy of being continuously served. Although by mouth they accept the authority of the *Vedas*, they are actually atheists (*nāstika*). The qualification (*mahimā*) of *viṣṇu-arcakas* (worshipers of Lord Viṣṇu's Deity), or neophyte devotees, may be relatively low among others in the realm of devotional service (*bhakti-rājya*), but they develop strong faith in Deity worship and in devotional service when they hear *hari-kathā* regarding the truthfulness and eternality of Śrī Viṣṇu's Deity from the lotus mouth of their spiritual master. Thousands of *karmīs* may conduct philanthropic activities such as opening hospitals, serving the poor (*daridra-sevā*), establishing communities to selflessly serve the down-trodden (*sevā-āśramas*), and establishing schools. The *nirbheda-jñānīs* (philosophical speculators or monists who regard the soul to be nondifferent from the Supreme Lord) may engage in impersonal meditation and other practices that require hard labor and austerities. However, such activities of the *karmīs* and *nirbheda-jñānīs* are insignificant compared to a neophyte devotee ringing a bell even once in service to the holy Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This statement is not a reflection of sectarianism (*sāmpradāyikatā*); it is the actual truth. Atheists cannot at all understand its deep meaning,

so they sometimes openly scorn devotional service, and sometimes try to inhibit devotional service in a hidden way by becoming *samanvaya-vādīs* who say that all of the various philosophies and religious practices are acceptable and lead to the same result.

Question 327—Who can engage in *hari-kīrtana*?

Answer—Only a person who has the following four qualities can engage in *hari-kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Hari). (1) One must be more humble than a blade of grass. (2) One must be more tolerant than a tree. (3) One must not expect any respect for oneself. (4) One must give respect to others. Although devotees are the best among living entities, they consider themselves to be lower than a blade of grass. One cannot be more humble than a blade of grass as long as one is not sincere and free from duplicity (*niṣkapaṭa*). To be *niṣkapaṭa* means to be free from material desires (*niṣkāma*).

Those who chant the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa are indeed very fortunate. *Kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana*, loud congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, is both the topmost practice (*sādhana*) and the topmost goal (*sādhya*), as confirmed by great devotees (*mahājana-gaṇa*) and scriptures (*śāstras*).

Those who engage in *kīrtana* are free from false ego. They have no desire for respect (*amānī*), and they do not have a material self-conception (*jaḍa-abhimāna*).

Question 328—How can one know substance that is beyond sense perception (*adhokṣaja-vastu*)?

Answer—Bhagavān Śrī Hari alone is *adhokṣaja-vastu*. That *adhokṣaja-vastu* can be known only through hearing (*śravaṇa*). One can know *adhokṣaja-vastu* when one eagerly hears *hari-kathā* (narrations of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes) in a serving mood

from saintly persons and a spiritual master. When we hear about mundane topics of this world, we try to ascertain if they are true using senses other than hearing. However, only the sense organ of aural reception (*śravaṇa-indriya*), and not any other senses, allows us to understand the topics that a spiritual master and scriptures describe to us. To do otherwise is ludicrousness or folly, because *adhokṣaja-vastu* is beyond the scope of knowledge acquired by the mundane senses. No one can understand *adhokṣaja-vastu* using worldly logic and reasoning (*tarka-patha*). When one has the great fortune of listening to topics about Lord Kṛṣṇa, which are beyond the scope of sensory knowledge (*indriya-jñāna*), from the lotus mouth of Śrī Gurudeva, one can understand those topics by *praṇipāta* (offering obeisances), *pari-praśna* (submissive inquiry), and *sevā* (serving).

Question 329—What is the meaning of *praṇipāta* (offering obeisances) and *pari-praśna* (submissive inquiry)?

Answer—The word *praṇipāta* means that one should bow down and surrender. It also means that one should listen attentively to what is being said. One must not lose one's focus and absorption of mind while listening to *hari-kathā*. In other words, one should completely 'give one's ears.'

It is not possible to truly hear (*śravaṇa*) without such *praṇipāta*; there is no other way to know transcendental subjects (*adhokṣaja-vastu*) and to understand topics of Lord Hari which are discussed in the scriptures and by saintly persons (*sādhus*), including spiritual masters.

Pari-praśna means to submissively inquire using earnest words that can reach the lotus feet of one's spiritual master, and to be ready to attentively listen to the answer. It is not *pari-praśna* if one asks a question with doubt and mistrust, or if one pretends to

ask a question with false ego. One cannot make a submissive inquiry without offering obeisances. One cannot render devotional service (*sevā*) properly if one does not reflect properly on the subject matter through submissive inquiry.

Question 330—Who is a *sādhu* (saintly person)?

Answer—The Vedic scriptures (*śrutis*) explain that one who is situated in his constitutional nature (*svarūpa*) is actually eternal (*sat*). Service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-dāsya*) is the very substance or existence (*sattā*), or the constitutional nature (*svabhāva*), of a living entity. Those who serve Lord Kṛṣṇa are eternal, and they are saintly persons. In other words, only devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are saintly persons. Devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhakti*) is the quality of being saintly (*sādhutva*). One who is devoid of devotion for Bhagavān cannot be called a saintly person. Non-devotees (*abhaktas*) are unsaintly persons (*asādhus*). The scriptures state:

asat-saṅga-tyāga,—ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra
'strī-saṅgī'—eka asādhu, 'kṛṣṇābhakta' āra

Meaning—To give up unfavorable association is the standard for behavior of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Those who are attached to women (*stri-sangī*) and those who are averse to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-abhakta*) are unsaintly (*asādhu*) and wicked.

kṛṣṇa-bhakta—niṣkāma, ataeva 'śānta'
bhukti-mukti-siddhi-kāmī—sakali 'aśānta'

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

Meaning: Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are devoid of material desires (*niṣkāma*); therefore, they are peaceful. Those who desire sense gratification (*bhukti*), liberation (*mukti*), or mystic perfections (*siddhis*) are restless.

Question 331—Is the holy Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-vigraha*) directly Bhagavān Himself?

Answer—Certainly. Atheistic heretics (*nāstika pāṣaṇḍi-jana*) say that there is no need to worship the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa. In their opinion, worship of the holy Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-mūrti-pūjā*) is opposed to the path taught by the Vedic scriptures (*śruti-patha*). They say that the Deity worship of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) is not taught by the *Vedas* (*śrauta-paddhati*), and that it actually originates from Buddhism, the philosophy propounded by the atheistic Gautama or Śākya-siṁha Buddha who appeared in Nepal about 2,500 years ago. If such persons have good fortune (*bhāgya*), some day they will be able to understand that Bhagavān Himself manifests in this world in the form of *arcā-avatāra* or *śrī-vigraha-avatāra*, Deity incarnations, to bestow mercy on living entities.

Substance from the spiritual world (*para-jagata*), which is beyond the grasp of mundane senses, can manifest in this world as a Deity as Bhagavān's proxy. Such a Deity may be made of clay, sandalwood, or other substances laid down as a paste (*lepyā*), or it may be a painting (*lekhyā*). The Deity is a direct substitute (*pratibhū*) of Bhagavān; in other words, it is equal to Him. [Note: a *pratibhū-vigraha* is a Deity that is considered non-different from the original Deity it replaces.]

The holy name (*nāma*) is the same as Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality who is addressed by the holy name (*nāmī*). To think that the variety of forms, qualities, and pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa are different from Him is opposed to knowledge of the non-dual nature of Absolute Reality (*advaya-jñāna*). Therefore, my revered spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva) says that one must not regard the transcendental Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa to be an inert material object. Also, one must not regard the transcendental Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa to be an object of one's sense gratification;

otherwise, one will commit an offense. In other words, one will go to hell if one regards the Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa to be an inert material object or an object of one's sense enjoyment. Only due to lack of *sambandha-jñāna*, knowledge of the mutual relationship between the Lord, living entities, and the material energy, does one regard the Deity of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*arcā*), and the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa who is the worthy object of worship, to be different. Such a mentality is a matter of great misfortune (*mahā-durbhāgya*). Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅga-deva, the original Supreme Lord, said:

īśvarera śrī-vigraha sac-cid-ānandākāra
se-vigrahe kaha sattva-guṇera vikāra
śrī-vigraha ye nā māne, sei ta' pāṣaṇḍa
aspṛśya, adṛśya, sei haya yama-daṇḍya

The transcendental form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is complete in eternity, cognizance, and bliss. However, some consider this transcendental form as a product of material goodness. One who does not accept the transcendental form of the Lord is certainly an agnostic (*pāṣaṇḍī*). Such a person should be neither seen nor touched. Indeed, he is subject to be punished by Yamarāja.

Idolaters (*pauttalika-gaṇa*) are fallen. They regard the worshipable Deity form of the Lord to be stone. Those with a hellish mentality regard the Śālagrāma form of Lord Viṣṇu to be just a piece of stone found in the Gaṇḍakī River. Moreover, they regard a bona fide spiritual master to be a mere human being. Such incorrect ideas take one to hell. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇava-gaṇa) are not idolaters; they do not regard the Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*arcā-vastu*) to be just a piece of stone or rock. They do not worship Lord Kṛṣṇa without performing self-purification (*bhūta-śuddhi*). [See note below]. Generally, the senses of materialistic persons are averse to serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. Their uncontrolled

senses only want to relish material forms and tastes. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa do not worship Him with such uncontrolled senses; they serve the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the embodiment of knowledge, bliss, and eternity (*sat-cit-ānada*), with their spiritual senses (*cid-indriyas*), which are inclined toward devotional service (*sevā-unmukha*). In this way, they give happiness to their worshipable Lord (*iṣṭa-deva*).

Śrī Caitanya-candra manifested the pastime of having direct *darśana* (vision) of Śrī Jagannātha-deva as Vrajendra-nandana, the son of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja. In the case of conditioned living entities, the body (*deha*) and soul (*dehī*) are different. This does not apply to Bhagavān; He and His Deity form are one and the same. Idolaters superimpose a difference of *deha* and *dehī* upon the Deity of Bhagavān and Bhagavān Himself. When they see the Deity of Lord Jagannātha, they say, "The wood of the *neem* tree (*nimba-kāṣṭha*) is Bhagavān, or He is present inside the wood of the *neem* tree." Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu does not support their fallacious idea. He regarded both Bhagavān and His Deity form to be the embodiment of knowledge, bliss, and eternity, and to be absolutely non-different from each other. He said ***pratimā naha tumi sākṣāt vrajendra-nandana***—"You are not a Deity, but directly Vrajendra-nandana, the son of Nanda Mahārāja."

[Note:

The five limbs of *arcana* (*pañcāṅga-arcana*)

Generally there are five limbs of *arcana*. This is also known as *pañcāṅga-viṣṇu-yajña,* the five-fold sacrifice performed for the pleasure of Viṣṇu. It includes various services beginning from the awakening of the Deity in the *brāhma-muhūrta* until His flower offering at the time of resting at night (*śayana-puṣpāñjali*). The five limbs are *abhigamana, upādāna, yoga, svādhyāya,* and *ijyā.*

Abhigamana**:** cleansing the Deity's temple, anointing the Deity with colors and sandalwood paste (*candana*), and at night removing the garlands, flowers, and so forth which have been offered to the Deity.

Upādāna: picking flowers and *tulasī* leaves, and gathering incense and other items required for worship.

Yoga-bhūta-śuddhi: meditating on oneself as a purely spiritual eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental realm of Vraja, beyond the material body and mind.

Svādhyāya*:* meditating on the meaning of *harināma* and the *mantras* received at the time of *dīkṣā* while chanting them, performing *kīrtana*, reciting verses and prayers, performing congregational chanting, and studying and following scriptures such as *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, and other *bhakti-śastras* that contain true *siddhānta*.

Ijyā: serving one's worshipable Deity in various ways.

This *pañcāṅga-arcana* is not a temporary, mundane activity, but an eternal, supremely pure limb of *bhakti* which helps one to attain the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavān.

Self-purification (*bhūta-śuddhi*)

Before *pūjā*, one should purify oneself by thinking in the following way: "By constitution I am an eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but by some misfortune I became averse to Him since time immemorial. Thus identifying myself with a material body in this illusory existence, and being trapped in this repeated cycle of birth and death, I was burning in the blazing fire of the threefold miseries. However, by great fortune— that is, by the mercy of *śrī-guru*—I have come to understand my identity as a minute, atomic spiritual particle, an eternal servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, completely aloof from the gross and subtle bodies. Now, by the order of *śrī-gurudeva*, under his shelter, I have

obtained the fortune of serving Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅga and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Vinodabihārījī.” With such feelings in the heart, one should recite and meditate on the following *mantra*:

nāhaṁ vipro na ca nara-patir nāpi vaiśyo na śūdro
nāhaṁ varṇī na ca gṛha-patir no vanastho yatir vā
kintu prodyan nikhila-
paramānanda-pūrṇāmṛtābdher
gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ

I am not a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya,* or *śūdra*, nor a *brahmacārī,gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha,* or *sannyāsī*. Being transcendental to this gross and subtle body, I am the servant of the servant of the servant of the lotus feet of the master of the *gopīs*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the ultimate shelter of everyone, is full of transcendental bliss, and is an ocean of unlimited nectar.]

Question 332—Why are we unable to progress in devotional service (*bhajana*)?

Answer—How can we make progress? We are busy with objects that are not related to devotional service. Therefore, external anxieties of the material world dominate us. We must give up *bhogya-darśana*, seeing the sense objects of the material world as meant for our gratification, and give up *bahir-darśana*, seeing only the external world. We should only engage in *antar-darśana*, seeing the soul and the Supersoul who are situated within us. We should be eager to serve Bhagavān, who is the worshipable Deity in our heart (*hṛdaya-devatā*). Unfortunately, we are not doing so, so how can we advance in devotional service? If we are busy seeking personal happiness and worldly progress, how is it possible to make progress in devotional service? If we are enthusiastic and busy to give happiness to plunderers and thieves, in the garb of our friends and relatives (*svajana*), how can we be enthusiastic and busy to serve our eternal, beloved

friends—namely, our spiritual master (*guru*) and Lord Kṛṣṇa? [**Note:***Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (8.22.9) states: What is the use of all of one's family members, who are actually plunderers taking away money that is useful for the service of the Lord in spiritual opulence?] We cannot reach a destination located to the east if we walk in the opposite direction, west. I say so many things, but people still have the misconception that, "My friends and relatives are objects of my love and affection," and this misconception is not going away or decreasing. In truth, only distress is written in the destiny of such persons. What more can I do about this?

Question 333—What is the goal (*prayojanīya-vastu*) of living entities?

Answer—Every living entity (*jīva*) is a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the real goal (*prayojana*) of his life is to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa and give pleasure to Him. The people of this world have forgotten their eternal nature (*svarūpa*), and they regard the four mundane goals of life (*cartur-varga*)—mundane religiosity (*dharma*), economic development (*artha*), sense gratification (*kāma*), and liberation (*mokṣa*)—to be their highest objectives. Actually, the topmost goal of human life (*parama-puruṣārtha*) is love for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema* or *kṛṣṇa-prīti*). This love puts to shame *catur-varga*, the four mundane goals. Bhagavān Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva bestows this love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. Although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, He also bestows love for Lord Kṛṣṇa. There can be no better teacher (*upadeṣṭā*) than Bhagavān Gaurāṅgadeva.

Question 334—Should one be a sense gratifier (*viṣayī*)?

Answer—Never. We are servants of Bhagavān; therefore, why should we be sense gratifiers? Sense objects (*viṣayas*) actually give us trouble. The waves of beautiful form (*rūpa*), taste

(*rasa*), fragrance (*gandha*), touch (*sparśa*), and sound (*śabda*) are pushing and manipulating us. It is not appropriate to be a sense gratifier. Bhagavān Śrī Gaurasundara said, "A person who wants to engage in devotional service to Bhagavān must not see anyone who is attached to sense gratification (*viṣayī-vyakti*)."

When a *viṣayī* or an object to be enjoyed by the senses (*indriya-grāhya vastu*) comes before our eyes, we forget Bhagavān. Moreover, we develop the mood that devotees of Bhagavān are *tuccha* (insignificant). Those who are advancing on the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*) in order to serve Bhagavān should never see anyone who is attached to sense gratification. The word *yoṣā* means 'sense objects.' Those who regard themselves to be an overlord of sense objects are indeed sense gratifiers. We should not be sense gratifiers. Moreover, we should not even see sense gratifiers and their associates (*saṅgīs*). Śrī Gaurasundara, playing the role of a physician (*cikitsaka*) who is expert in treating and curing the disease of material existence (*bhava-roga*), told us, "Do not associate with persons who are attached to sense gratification. Do not associate with women. Do not take these two types of unfavorable association."

Question 335—Can I make disciples?

Answer—Show compassion to living entities (*jīvas*) and give up *hiṁsā* (feelings of violence and harm). In other words, try to make living entities who are averse to Bhagavān (*bahir-mukha*) inclined or favorable to serve Him. Do not artificially pose as a spiritual master, which is a form of committing violence to others. Do not play the role of a spiritual master and do not adorn yourself in the garb of a spiritual master just to partake in the ocean of sense enjoyment. If you become guileless and sincerely serve a spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa, you can

obtain their *kṛpā-śakti* (power of mercy). Then there is no need to fear; otherwise, everything will be ruined.

Question 336—How should I think about Śrī Gurudeva?

Answer—Render devotional service (*bhakti*) to Śrī Gurudeva like you do for Kṛṣṇa. Have the same conception for the spiritual master (Gurudeva) as you have for Bhagavān. Do not regard the spiritual master (*guru*) to be any less than Bhagavān (Supreme Personality of Godhead). Every saintly person (*sādhu*) has the following duties: (1) he must regard the spiritual master to be like Bhagavān, (2) he must worship the spiritual master like he worships Bhagavān, and (3) he must serve the spiritual master like he serves Bhagavān. If a *sādhu* does not do so, he will fall from the glorious position of being a disciple.

Only that person who regards the spiritual master and the Supreme Personality of Godhead to be non-different from each other can understand the secrets of the scriptures (*śāstras*), and he alone can chant the holy name of Lord Hari and speak *hari-kathā* (narrations of pastimes of Lord Hari). Śrī Kṛṣṇa has appeared in the form of a spiritual master to instruct us about His own devotional service (*sevā*). Only by good fortune can one understand the infallible truth of the scriptures; unfortunate people become doubtful and die by drowning in the ocean of material existence (*saṁsāra-samudra*).

Śrī Gurudeva is not *viṣaya-vigraha* (Supreme Enjoyer like Śrī Kṛṣṇa) or *mūla-āśraya-vigraha* (original shelter or receptacle of love like Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī). He is an expanded form of the *mūla-āśraya-vigraha*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *viṣaya-vigraha*, whereas Gurudeva is *āśraya-vigraha*. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the predominating Absolute or the *bhoktā-bhagavān* (Supreme Lord who is the ultimate enjoyer). Śrī Gurudeva is the predominated Absolute. In other

words, he is the *sevaka-bhagavān* (servitor godhead) or *ārādhaka-bhagavān* (worshiper godhead). Although Śrī Gurudeva is *āśraya-vigraha* (receptacle of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa) or *sevā-vigraha* (embodiment of service), he is *kṛṣṇa-priyatama* or *kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*, beloved of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This is the speciality of *guru-tattva*, the truth regarding the spiritual master. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *pūrṇa-śaktimān*, the complete possessor of potency, and Śrī Gurudeva is *pūrṇa-śakti*, the complete potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Gurudeva is not an ordinary living entity (*jīva*); he is the master and lord of living entities. Śrī Gurudeva is *vibhu-caitanya-svāṁśa-śakti*, the personal potency (*svarūpa-śakti*) of the Supreme Infinite Consciousness. We living entities are *aṇu-caitanya* (atomic conscious entities), *taṭasthā-śakti* (marginal potency), or *vibhinna-aṁśa* (separated portions).

Question 337—Who are Gauḍīya devotees?

Answer—Devotees of Lord Viṣṇu are known as Vaiṣṇavas; devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa are known as Kārṣṇas, and devotees of Rādhājī are known as Gauḍīyas.

Gauḍīya devotees of Lord Gaura or Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (Rūpānuga) who have taken shelter of the conjugal mellow of paramour love (*parakīya-madhura-rasa*) between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*, who are married to other *gopas*. *Gauḍīya-bhaktas*, devotees in the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, are followers of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, an incarnation of Lalitājī. Thus, Gauḍīya devotees are known as Śrī-Svārūpa-Rūpānuga, followers of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. In this connection, Śrīman Mahāprabhu told Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara jī: ***tomāra gauḍīyā kare eteka vyavahāra*** —“Indeed, your Gauḍīya or Bengali Vaiṣṇava has greatly implicated Me." [*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 12.125]

Gauḍīya devotees follow the System of devotional service based on the mood of a *mañjarī* (maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhikā). Their worshipable Deities are Śrī Rādhā Govinda-jī, Śrī Rādhā Madana-mohana-jī, and Śrī Rādhā-Gopīnātha-jī. It is said in the scriptures:

śrī-rādhā-saha śrī-madana-mohana
śrī-rādhā-saha śrī-govinda caraṇa
śrī-rādhā-saha śrīla-gopīnātha
ei tīna ṭhākura haya gauḍīyāra nātha
ei tīna ṭhākura gauḍīyāke kariyāchena ātmasāt
e tinera caraṇa vandoṅ, tine mora nātha

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

{The Vṛndāvana Deities of Madana-mohana with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Govinda with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and Gopīnātha with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī are the life and soul of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. These three Deities of Vṛndāvana [Madana-mohana, Govinda, and Gopīnātha] have absorbed the heart and soul of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas [followers of Lord Caitanya]. I worship Their lotus feet, for They are the Lords of my heart.}

The eighteen-syllable Gopāla *mantra* chanted and worshipped by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas addresses Bhagavān by three names: (1) Kṛṣṇa, (2) Govinda, and (3) Gopī-jana-vallabha (beloved of the cowherd damsels or *gopīs*). The name Kṛṣṇa in this *mantra* refers to Śrī Madana-mohana; the name Govinda refers to Śrī Govindajī, and the name Gopī-jana-vallabha refers to Śrī Gopī-nātha-jī. Realization of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s aspect as the enchanter of mundane cupid (Madana-mohana-jī) means having a relationship (*sambandha*) with Him. Service to Govindajī is called *abhidheya*, the practical process of devotional service. Developing loving attraction for the beloved of the cowherd damsels (Gopī-jana-vallabha) is the *prayojana*, or goal of life.

Madana-mohana is the presiding Deity of the principle of relationship (*sambandha-tattva*);

Govindajī is the presiding Deity of the principle of spiritual practice (*abhidheya-tattva*); and Gopī-jana-vallabha is the presiding Deity of the principle of the ultimate spiritual goal of human life (*prayojana*).

Generally devotees who take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gaurāṅga are known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. The residents of Gauḍa-deśa (state of Bengal) are known as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Just as devotees of Odisha (Utkala-deśa) are known as *Uḍiyā-bhaktas*, residents of Bengal are known as *Gauḍīya-bhaktas*.

Question 338—Are renounced persons (*tyāgīs*) also conditioned souls controlled by *māyā*?

Answer—Both sense enjoyers (*bhogīs*) and renounced persons (*tyāgīs*) are bound (*baddha*). Only devotees are engaged in serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are neither sense enjoyers (*bhogīs*) nor dry renunciates (*tyāgīs*). Devotees have no desire for their own satisfaction and happiness (*sva-sukha-vāñcā*); their only concern is Bhagavān's happiness. In contrast, both *bhogīs* and *tyāgīs* desire their own happiness (*sva-sukha*), which leads to distress. Devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa have no material desires. They are selfless by nature. Therefore, they can be truly happy. Serving Bhagavān is the only *dharma* of a living entity. When one is indifferent to serving Him, one develops a desire to become God and becomes entangled with objects of sense gratification. If we are careful in this regard, nothing in this world or the next will interfere with our inclination to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 339—Is there free will within the living being?

Answer—A living entity is an atomic particle of consciousness (*aṇu-cit*), and he can be covered by the greater power (*bṛhat-śakti*) called *māyā*. Due to this covering, a living entity becomes averse or

indifferent to devotional service. He is an atomic particle of consciousness having independent desire. By this independent desire, he may be in one of two conditions or states: as a devotee or nondevotee. A nondevotee is in the conditioned state (*baddha-avasthā*) of being entangled in *māyā* and averse to serving Bhagavān (*sevā-vimukha*), and he develops an irresistible and uncontrollable desire to become Brahman or the Lord of *māyā*. If a nondevotee associates with pure devotees, by their mercy he can become spiritually healthy and strong by realizing his eternal nature as a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*sevā-dharma* or *ātma-dharma*). Once he becomes spiritually competent, he does not get entangled in the snare of the illusory energy again. If one tries to eliminate his independent desire, he will take on the qualities of matter (*prākṛta* or *jaḍa-vastu*). Being insentient (*jaḍatā*) and being sentient (*cetanatā*) are categorically different. The desire to enjoy material objects covers one's consciousness and causes one to deviate from the path of spiritual love. When one gets mercy from a devotee, one can easily be liberated from the conditioned state. The proper use of our independence is to follow in the footsteps (*ānugatya*) of advanced Vaiṣṇavas, and improper use is to pursue sense gratification.

Question 340—How do the external energy (*bahiraṅgā-śakti*) and spiritual energy (*cid-śakti*) of Bhagavān work?

Answer—The temporary world manifests from the external energy (*bahiraṅgā-śakti*) of Bhagavān, and three material qualities act in it. On the other hand, the eternal world manifests from the spiritual energy (*cit-śakti*), and the three spiritual potencies of existence (*sandhinī*), knowledge (*saṁvit*), and bliss (*hlādinī*) always function there. The material world that is manifest from the external material energy (*acit-śakti*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and the spiritual world that

is manifest from His internal spiritual energy (*cit-śakti*), have very different natures. A living entity is simultaneously different and nondifferent (*bheda-abheda prakāśa*) from Bhagavān, and he manifests from Bhagavān's marginal energy. Bhagavān has three eternal energies: material, marginal, and spiritual. When a living entity, who manifests from the marginal energy (*taṭaṣthā-śakti*), desires to enjoy the temporary material world, his inauspiciousness begins and he experiences distress. Due to being averse to Bhagavān, he is overwhelmed by *māyā*, the external energy of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but when he becomes favorable to Bhagavān, the spiritual energy arranges for him to serve Bhagavān.

Question 341—What are the distinguishing characteristics and features of *Guru-tattva* (truth regarding a spiritual master) and *Rādhā-tattva* (truth regarding Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī)?

Answer—Śrī Rādhā Ṭhākurāṇī is the original receptacle of love for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*mūla āśraya-vigraha*). She is the crest-jewel of all teachers of sweet, conjugal paramour love (*madhura-rasa-ācārya-śiromaṇī*). Śrī Rādhā, also known as Śrī Vārṣabhānavī (daughter of Śrī Vṛṣabhānu Mahārāja), is the best consort of Lord Kṛṣṇa. My spiritual master, who is an *ācārya* in *madhura-rasa*, is a beloved confidante (*priya-sakhī*) of Śrī Rādhā; he is an eternally-perfect cowherd damsel of Vraja (*nitya-siddha vraja-gopī*).

guru-rūpā sakhī bāyeṁ (bāme)

[*Prārthanā*, Song 11, Stanza 3, Line 3]

Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya explains in the above line that our spiritual master has an eternal form as a confidante of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī (*guru-rūpā-sakhī*). Thus, he is a personal expansion (*kāya-vyūha*) of Śrī Vārṣabhānavī Devī and is nondifferent from Her.

Question 342—Is praying to Bhagavān for good health opposed to devotional service?

Answer – No. We should accept whatever condition Śrī Kṛṣṇa puts us in. It is favorable for one to desire good health so that one can best perform devotional service. However, it is inauspicious for a nondevotee to request Bhagavān's service to give him good health so that he can pursue materialistic activities which will increase his unwanted habits and desires. It is certainly proper to pray at the lotus feet of Śrī Nṛsiṁhadeva, the destroyer of impediments, for good health to best render devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 343—Should one engage in devotional service even if one is unhealthy?

Answer—It is illogical to be indifferent to devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa even if one is in bad health. I think that I will never give up devotional service, even if I am very sick. [Śrīla Prabhupāda expresses his determination here.] If one is physically incapacitated, one can still perform devotional service through remembrance (*smaraṇa*).

Question 344—Is it proper to think of a non-devotee as a devotee?

Answer—No. Śrī Gurudeva is *nāmācārya*, a preceptor of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It is not proper to regard a *nāma-aparādhī*, an offender of the holy name, as a spiritual master. *Sad-guru*, a bona fide spiritual master, never tries to satisfy anyone's senses. In other words, he does not speak to indulge anyone. Those who seek short-term, not ultimate, benefits (*preyaḥ-panthī*) do not like the words of those who perform activities that are ultimately beneficial and auspicious (*śreyaḥ-panthī*). *Preyaḥ-panthī* search for experiences and narrations (*kathā*) according to their worldly desires; therefore, they remain cheated of their actual welfare.

To regard a non-devotee as a devotee, or fake devotion as devotion, is cheating oneself (*ātma-vañcanā*). When we do not have the good fortune of serving and respecting devotees, we have the tendency to mistake non-devotees as devotees. Can a crow become a peacock simply by artificially attaching a peacock tail to itself? Can a blue jackal become a lion, king of the animals? How long can dishonesty or deceitfulness remain covered? Eventually, truth will certainly be revealed. Those who serve Lord Kṛṣṇa are not weak; they have great strength and determination. Service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*) is a great thing, and a servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa is a great person; one understands this by good fortune (*bhāgya*). When, due to being averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa, one regards insignificant things like pride of wealth (*dhana-mada*), pride of learning (*vidyā-mada*), and pride of beauty (*rūpa-mada*) to be great, one becomes indifferent (*udāsīna*) to serving Him and His devotees, and thus one is put into trouble (*vipada*).

Question 345—Is the desire for prestige favorable for developing *bhakti*?

Answer—There is no benefit in hankering for material prestige; it is a great obstacle for *vaiṣṇavī-pratiṣṭhā* (respectability and mood of being a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa). Prestige, which is compared to pig stool, should be rejected; we should always remember this. There are two paths: auspicious path (*śreyaḥ*) and inauspicious path of sense gratification (*preyaḥ*). Travelers on the path of devotional service seek transcendental auspiciousness, and they are selfless by nature. Travelers on the path of pleasing one's senses (*preyaḥ-pantha*) are sense gratifiers and seekers of prestige. Only association with devotees is auspicious.

Question 346—Should one reject bad association (*asat-saṅga*)?

Answer—Not everyone is fortunate enough to understand the activities and behavior (*kriyā-mudrā*) of Vaiṣṇavas. If someone, out of ignorance, ridicules me, that is to my benefit. However, it distresses me that if someone blasphemes my eternally-worshipable Śrī Guru or Vaiṣṇavas, he and his forefathers will go to hell. Intelligent people have the duty to achieve auspiciousness in this rare form of human life. Associating with false or imitation devotees leads to problems and miseries. Those who pursue sense gratification and dry renunciation are walking on the path that is opposed to devotional service. In other words, they are engaging in nondevotional activities. There are thirteen deviant groups (*apa-sampradāyas*), including *āula* and *bāula*, with which association is bad. One will certainly fall down if one mistakes bad association with such fallen souls or hypocrites attached to women for *sat-saṅga*. Never associate with people who are following the wrong path, as this leads to falling down. Those who try to enjoy material objects or relish mundane emotions have no transcendental knowledge; they are naive (*adīkṣita*). They may be pseudo-devotees (*asat*), not real devotees. We should advance in spiritual life by giving up association with such nondevotees and accepting *sat-saṅga*, association with advanced devotees. In other words, we should follow the instructions of saintly persons and scriptures.

Question 347—Who is not busy in the service of Bhagavān?

Answer—Those who hanker for things other than service to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot be praised. Such hankering is the poisonous fruit of their misfortune. Those with less intelligence will attain auspiciousness only after a delay. They do not stay busy serving Bhagavān, and thus they have

extraneous desires (*anyābhilāṣa*). In other words, their attachment to the material world increases. You should not worry about such people. *Sva-karma-phala-bhuk pumān*. [One enjoys or suffers the results of one's past actions].

Question 348—Should one be bold and proud (*bahādura*)?

Answer—No. Disobeying or transgressing one's spiritual master and seeking reputation lead to one's downfall (*sarva-nāśa*). Pride in one's great wealth and prowess is not a desirable quality (*prayojanīya-viṣaya*) of a devotee. Such pride may lead one to disobey one's *guru*, causing many problems (*asuvidhā*). Please bless me that my heart never hankers to become 'great.' I often speak harsh words of corrective advice to those who are very near and dear (*ātmīya*) to me; I anticipate that they will forgive me. They may misunderstand me; my advice is meant only for their spiritual reformation and upliftment of devotional sentiments. They may misconstrue my constructive criticism to be an attack on their character. ['*ulṭā bujhili (samajhā) rāma*'] This is a matter of great distress.

Question 349—How should an initiated (*dīkṣita*) devotee perform *pitṛ-śrāddha*, the ceremony to honor and benefit dead forefathers and relatives?

Answer—When an initiated devotee who has taken shelter of the holy name loses his father, he should wait for ten days. On the eleventh day after the death of his father, he should offer *mahā-prasāda* of Lord Kṛṣṇa as *piṇḍa* (oblation) to his deceased father. Afterwards he should serve pure devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who are the real *brāhmaṇas*, by offering them *mahā-prasāda* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and he should give charity. It is preferable that this is done in a *maṭha*. On the other hand, nondevotees and

uninitiated devotees, who are not chanting *hari-nāma*, and who cannot tolerate harsh words from ordinary society, should offer oblations according to *smārta* tradition. When one chants the holy name of Lord Hari, one's forefathers cannot become ghosts. Scriptures do not support the idea that if one is chanting, his forefathers can enter ghostly bodies after death. 'One's forefathers become ghosts after death' is a flagrant misconception propounded by adherents of the *smārta* tradition. Less qualified persons who have not yet entered the Vaiṣṇava fold have this misconception. If one offers *śrāddha* (oblations) to one's deceased forefathers according to the *smārta*tradition, those forefathers will still have to again enter the womb of a mother and suffer. Devotees of Bhagavān reject the process of offering *śrāddha* to deceased forefathers as per the opinion of the *smārta* tradition.

The ideology of the *smārta* tradition (*smārta-paddhati*) is opposed to the scriptures; therefore, devotees do not accept it. It is difficult for followers of the *smārta* tradition to understand the ideology of liberated personalities.

Nondevotees follow the ideology of the working class (*śudras*), and they observe a mourning period of thirteen days during which they exhibit various marks of grief, such as a shaven head. They eat only raw food called *haviṣya-anna*. Devotees who have taken shelter of the holy name accept *mahā-prasāda* every day. They do not follow the regulative principles stipulated by *smārta* tradition. These days there is a popular misconception that Vaiṣṇavas become ghosts after going to the next world, and *śrāddha* will be performed for them using items which were not offered to Bhagavān. All of you should remain far away from such misconceptions.

Question 350—How can we eliminate dissatisfaction?

Answer—Once we develop devotion for the lotus feet of Bhagavān, there is no reason for lamentation. In this world we are averse to serving Bhagavān; therefore, we are subjugated by the results of our past actions (*karma-phala*). According to *karma-phala*, sometimes we experience happiness or love, and sometimes we experience suffering or hate. Once we realize the benefit of serving Bhagavān, we cannot be disturbed by anxieties (*kleśas*) or intense desire for happiness (*sukhaiśaṇā*). Always absorb your mind in serving Bhagavān, and no one will be able to harm you in any way. If you are fickle and dissatisfied with someone in this world, you will not remember service to Bhagavān. Conflicts over words, conflicts involving the body, and conflicts within the mind, such as dissatisfaction or brooding, prevent one from serving Bhagavān. Therefore, be as tolerant as a tree, and by the desire of Bhagavān stay in Kurukṣetra; only this will bring you auspiciousness. Wait there until Śrī Gaurahari personally sends you somewhere else.

Question 351—Are Āula and Bāula not Vaiṣṇavas?

Answer—Āula, Bāula, and others are nondevotees (*avaiṣṇavas*). They take a woman (*mātājī* or *strī*) and wander in the guise of a saintly person in the renounced order of life. Even though the pure acts of true devotees and the wicked acts of false devotees may look alike from the outside, there is actually a difference of Heaven and Earth, as between milk and lime water. The scriptures say:

asat-saṅga-tyāga,—ei vaiṣṇava-ācāra
'strī-saṅgī'—eka asādhu, 'kṛṣṇābhakta' āra

Translation—A Vaiṣṇava should always avoid the association of ordinary people. Common people are very much materially attached, especially to women. Vaiṣṇavas should also avoid the company of those who are not devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

The *bābājīs* of *akhāḍās* (monasteries) have illicit association with women (*strī-saṅga*), and they are not devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-abhakta*). Therefore, we should strictly avoid their bad association; otherwise, it will be impossible to render devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*). It is our duty to stay away from them, while not criticizing anyone. Ignorant (*asat*) people have materialistic thoughts while devotees only think about Bhagavān, so we should only follow the path of devotees.

Question 352—Should we develop great faith towards the Supreme Lord?

Answer—We always induce (inspire) servants in monasteries by giving them classes on spiritual topics so that their faith in the Supreme Lord increases. One attains results according to one's destiny. All will benefit when they receive the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa. We should always discuss *āśraya-jātīyarasa*, the mellow in the heart of devotees who are the receptacle of love of Godhead. When we do so, the false ego (*abhimāna*) of *jaḍa-puruṣa* (having a material body and being a materialistic person) will not give us trouble. We may become entangled in all types of sense enjoyment (*bhogas*) through our mental efforts (*mānasa-ceṣṭā*). However, when we develop devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhakti*), which is the eternal function of our soul (*ātma-vṛtti*), our pure, virtuous soul will seek *hari-kathā* (narrations of Lord Hari's pastimes).

Question 353—What is surrender (*śaraṇāgati*)?

Answer—Whatever happens, only the unstoppable desire of Lord Kṛṣṇa prevails. If I have a desire to do something but Kṛṣṇa's desire is not there, then the outcome will change to match Lord Kṛṣṇa's desire. Complete surrender (*śaraṇāgati*) or peace (*śānti*) means to adjust one's desire with Lord Kṛṣṇa's

desire. All material objects (*prāpañcika-viṣayas*) are favorable for Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (*kṛṣṇa-līlā*). In this material world (*prapañca-jagata*, made of the five elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether) we forget Bhagavān after attaining happiness. The merciful Bhagavān created it to test our mind. If we remain happy in this material world, we will certainly forget Lord Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, His creating it shows His mercy and compassion.

One cannot go to Vraja by one's own desire. One can reside in Vraja only by the auspicious wishes (*śubhecchā*) and mercy (*kṛpā*) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa. If we go on a pilgrimage to Vraja according to our own desire, such a pilgrimage is unfavorable and goes against the sweet will of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Although we had a strong desire to go to Mathurā during the month of Caitra (March-April), our desire was not fulfilled because Kṛṣṇa's desire was not there. Now, we desire to go next month in Āśvina. However, if Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has a different desire, we will 'have nothing in our hand.' If we attempt to act against His desire, we will become a culprit.

Our body, mind, and soul will remain healthy only when we engage in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*). If, like me, one becomes averse to such devotional service, his body, mind, and soul will disturb him. [This statement is an expression of the Vaiṣṇava humility of Śrīla Prabhupāda].

Question 354—Can we serve Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva in the mood that He is our husband?

Answer—Only Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the *viṣaya-vigraha* (object of a devotee's *prema*); everyone else is meant to be enjoyed by Him. Although Śrī Gaurasundara is *viṣaya-vigraha* Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, He is absorbed in the mood of a devotee (*bhakta-bhāva*). Although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself, He is absorbed in a quest for Kṛṣṇa's happiness. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is *mādhurya-vigraha*

(personification of sweetness) and Śrī Gaurāṅga is *audārya-vigraha* (personification of magnanimity). While Śrī Gaurasundara is Kṛṣṇa, He is relishing His own beauty in the mood of Śrīmatī Rādhikā (*āsvādaka-viṣaya-vigraha*). If a living entity (*jīva*) develops the false conception of being a relisher (*āsvādaka*), he will certainly experience material bondage (*saṁsāra-daśā*). When *bhogya-jīva* (living entity meant to be enjoyed by Lord Kṛṣṇa) develops *bhoktā-abhimāna* (false conception of being an enjoyer), that false conception causes his fall-down. Although by constitutional nature Śrī Gaurasundara is *viṣaya-vigraha* or *bhoktā*, He performs pastimes in the mood of *āśraya-vigraha*. Thus, in accordance with *vaidha-vicāra* (religion following scriptural regulations), Mahāprabhu can only be married to Śrī Lakṣmīpriyā and Śrī Viṣṇupriyā. Other than Śrī Lakṣmīpriyā and Śrī Viṣṇupriyā, His devotees are in the mood of *śuddha-dāsya-rasāśritā dāsīs* (maidservants having a mood of unalloyed servitorship). Thus, such devotees in the mood of a servant cannot be included in *mukhya-rasānanda*, which refers to the primary mellow of conjugal love (*śṛṅgāra-rasa*). When the word *pati* (husband or conjugal lover) is used to address Gaurasundara in *madhura-rati* (conjugal mood), we should understand that this actually refers to Lord Gaurasundara's manifestation as Lord Kṛṣṇa, who enjoys conjugal pastimes with the cowherd damsels in Vraja. Some people maintain the ill-conceived idea (*apa-saṁpradāya* or outside of the teachings of the four authorized Vaiṣṇava philosophies) called Gaura-nāgarī. Out of ignorance, they regard Gaurasundara as the *nāgara* (attractive pleasure seeker who enjoys the company of beautiful lovers in the conjugal mellow). However, this idea is *aśāstrīya* (not based on scriptures) and *aparādhamaya* (offensive). Śrī Vṛndāvana-dāsa Ṭhākura wrote in *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata:*

ataeva yata mahā-mahima sakale
gaurāṅga-nāgara hena stava nāhi bale

Translation: Therefore, great personalities do not offer prayers addressing Lord Gaurāṅga as 'Gaurāṅga Nāgara,' a pleasure seeker or enjoyer of damsels.

Question 355—Is it bad to associate with *gṛha-vratīs*, those who put household affairs at the center of their life?

Answer—We never aspire to associate with those who desire to strengthen *gṛha-vrata dharma*, attachment to household life. We should have a strong desire to serve a person who is attached to devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) and who is situated in *kṛṣṇa-gṛha-dharma* (life of a householder devotee who serves Lord Kṛṣṇa and regards his residence to be a temple for serving Lord Kṛṣṇa). It is our duty to take shelter of a saintly person (*sādhu*) and to give up bad association (*duḥ-saṅga*). Confused persons who mistake unsaintly persons (a*sādhus*) to be saintly persons (*sādhus*) will always face disasters and adversities.

Question 356—What is the aim and object of establishing monasteries (*maṭha*s)?

Answer—*Maṭha*s are not established by the mercy of ordinary people. We can serve Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva through *śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana* (loud congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa). The verse ***yajñaiḥ saṅkīrtana-prāyair yajanti hi sumedhasaḥ*** is evidence of this. The ideal established by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of Gaura-sundara is the only path of auspiciousness for living entities (*jīvas*).

Monasteries are not established to make the mind of sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*) and renunciants (*tyāgīs*) happy. Monasteries are established to preach pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) to Lord

Kṛṣṇa. We will attain auspiciousness by serving Lord Hari by establishing monasteries.

It is not our aim and object to help a monastery by collecting one or two rupees. We must not insist on accepting assistance from useless people. If you can benefit someone by explaining topics about the faultless truth, you will be fortunate and successful by serving a monastery which is dedicated to the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Many times, people will try to deceive us. We should regard this as a test from Bhagavān. If a living entity is unfortunate, he cannot cross this insurmountable illusory potency (*māyā*). Both Māyāvādīs (monists and impersonalists) and *bhogīs* (sense gratifiers) are conditioned living entities. Only those inclined to serve Bhagavān can understand, by the mercy of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, what is beneficial or unbeneficial for them. People who have a preference for sense gratification become averse to the realization (*upalabdhi*) of truth.

I have a strong desire to go to Gayā immediately and boldly preach there. When Lord Kṛṣṇa desires, this desire of mine will transform into action.

Question 357—What is the *citta-vṛtti* (disposition) of devotees?

Answer—It has been told in *Kenopaniṣad* that *ādhikārika-devatās* (authorized demigods) are able to use their designated powers (*nirdiṣṭa-śakti*) only after receiving them from *sarva-śaktimān* Bhagavān (all-powerful Supreme Personality of Godhead). When Bhagavān takes away those powers, they lose them. Devotees who follow Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (*śrī-rūpānuga bhakta-vṛnda*) do not base their faith (*āsthā*) on their own abilities; rather, they ascribe all glories to the Original Source (*mūla-sthāna*). We perform all activities with the aim of pleasing Śrī Kṛṣṇa-caitanya, Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Bhaktivinoda, and Śrī

Guru-pāda-padma. If we give up the path of devotional service (*bhakti-patha*) or the path of *ānugatya* (staying under guidance of devotees), the propensity of being bewildered by false ego (*ahaṅkāra-vimūḍha-ātma-tva*) will devour us.

Question 358—What is the difference between *vaiṣṇava-vaidāntikas* (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who are scholars of the Vedic scriptures) and *kevala-advaita-vādīs* (followers of the doctrine of exclusive non-dualism, monism, or impersonalism, which emphasizes the absolute oneness of the living entities with God)?

Answer—The *advaita-vādīs* (adherents of monism) and *māyāvādīs* (advocates of impersonalism) lean towards *nirviśeṣa-vāda* (philosophy that the Absolute Truth is formless and impersonal), whereas the *vaiṣṇava-vaidāntika-gaṇa* (devotee scholars of the Vedānta philosophy) accept *nitya-saviśeṣavāda* (philosophy that the Supreme Lord is always endowed with personal features, all transcendental qualities, and form). The *advaita-vādīs* are *pracchanna-nāstika* (covered atheists) and the *vaiṣṇava-vaidāntika-gaṇa* are *niṣkapaṭa-āstika* (sincere theists without duplicity and deceitfulness). The *advaita-vādīs* are *āroha-vādī* (followers of the path of trying to understand spiritual topics by argument and reason) and the *vaiṣṇava-vaidāntika-gaṇa* are *avaroha-vādī* (followers of the process of receiving transcendental knowledge through bona fide disciplic succession). The *advaita-vādīs* are opposed to *śaraṇāgati* (process of surrender to Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His representative, the spiritual master). The *vaiṣṇava-vaidāntika* eternally favor the process of absolute or exclusive surrender to Śrī Kṛṣṇa or His representative (*aikāntika-śaraṇāgati*).

Question 359—What type of conduct (*nīti*) is accepted by devotees?

Answer—Real devotees (*bhaktas*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa never engage in immorality or unprincipled conduct (*anaitikatā*). All good conduct and wisdom (*sunītis*) originate from the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of religious principles (*dharma-mūrti*). The highest morality (*sarvocca-nīti-vijñāna*) of living entities (*jīvātmā*) is loving attachment (*anurāga*) to the Supersoul (*parmātmā*). The ultimate degree of this loving attachment is present only in devotees (*kṛṣṇa-bhaktas*).

Lord Jesus Christ, a great personality (*mahātmā*), propagated moral principles such as nonviolence, and gave us the conception that God is our father. However, even such high moral principles (*uttama-nītis*) would have to be multiplied millions of times to reach perfection. In other words, the love of God taught by Lord Jesus Christ can be enhanced a million-fold, and still it would have to wait to serve the love of Godhead exhibited by devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, who serve Him in moods of friendship, parenthood, and conjugal relationship. Lord Jesus taught that God is our father, and generally it is the father who serves the children, and not vice-versa. However, devotees who aspire to follow the mood of Mother Yaśodā or Nanda Mahārāja are millions of times superior to devotees who regard God to be their father.

Our principles are not confined only to *laukika-nītis* (secular or mundane principles). Transcendental principles (*alaukika-nīti*) override mundane principles (*laukika-nīti*). Pure love of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*pāramārthika prema-prayojana*), the ultimate goal of human life, transcends even *alaukika-nīti*, and we want such love. When a pure soul (*śuddha-jīvātmā*) is established in that eternal principle of love (*ati-marttya-prema-nīti*), mundane principles (*laukika-nītis*) seem very frivolous. Devotees feel neither aversion nor attraction to mundane principles. Mundane codes of morality and conduct (*nītis*) only become successful by learning from loving devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa

(*premī-puruṣa*). Thus, such mundane *nītis* follow *kṛṣṇa-prema* (love for Lord Kṛṣṇa) like a maidservant. [An example of this is Śrī Vasudeva Mahārāja, who promised King Kaṁsa that he would give his eighth son to him. However, out of love and affection for Lord Kṛṣṇa, he abandoned the mundane moral principle of truthfulness and instead took Lord Kṛṣṇa to Gokula. Here, mundane morality became a maidservant of *prema-prayojana*, the spiritual goal of human life or *kṛṣṇa-prema*]. Spiritual persons aspiring for the ultimate goal of life or *kṛṣṇa-prema* (*pāramārthika-vyakti-gaṇa*) are never immoral (*nīti-hīna*). Those who hate codes of moral conduct (*nīti-vidveṣī*) and those who have fallen from codes of moral conduct (*nīti-bhraṣṭa*) can never be *pāramārthika* (spiritual aspirants of the ultimate goal of life) in the truest sense. Adultery and improper behavior (*vyabhicāra*) are never included in *bhakti* (devotional service).

Question 360—How can we understand that Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes (*līlās*) are not obscene?

Answer—The eternal associates of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*pārṣadas*) are great devotees (*bhaktas*); they are *jitendriya-kula-cūḍāmaṇi*, the crest-jewels of personalities who have perfectly conquered their senses. They discuss *kṛṣṇa-līlā* (pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa). By hearing (*śravaṇa*), remembering (*smaraṇa*), and chanting (*kīrtana*) the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa one is freed from sin (*pāpa*) and transmigration in the material world (*saṁsāra*). Moreover, one attains everlasting peace, love of Godhead, and permanent relief from material desires (*kāmanās*) and lust (*vāsanās*). The pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa are within *sarvottama-nītī*, the highest standards of wisdom and morality. His pastimes are worshipable for all of the *śrutis* (*Vedas*). Those attached to worldly conceptions of morality (*jāgatika-nītivādī-jana*) cannot comprehend this with their

insignificant intelligence (*kṣudra-tama-mastiṣka*). The loving, amorous pastimes (*prema-līlā*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa are not mundane like love affairs between a hero (*nāyaka*) and heroine (*nāyikā*) in this world, such as Romeo and Juliet, or like sexual affairs (*kāma-līlā*) between even the most moral woman and man. The *kāma* (amorous desire) of the material world is only a mundane or ordinary function of one's sense organs, whereas the *kāma* of the transcendental kingdom of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-rājya*) is *vigraha-viśiṣṭa*, a spiritual or transcendental embodiment of Lord Kṛṣṇa. [Lord Kṛṣṇa is the first manifestation or *avatāra* of Kāmadeva, Cupid. His son Pradyumna is the second manifestation of Kāmadeva in Dvārakā.] The desire to give satisfaction to one's own senses is called lust (*kāma*), whereas the desire to satisfy the senses of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is called pure love or *prema*. Lust (*kāma*) is like darkness, and love (*prema*) is like *nirmala-bhāskara*, the pure, radiant Sun. Transcendental amorous desire (*aprākṛta-kāma*) or love (*prema*) is characteristic of *kṛṣṇa-indriya-pūrtti-vāñchā*, the desire to give complete satisfaction to Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental senses.

Madana (Cupid) lives in the heavenly planets and his body was burned by Lord Śiva's anger; thus, he does not have limbs (*anaṅga*). He is an enemy of the living entities and gives them trouble and suffering by shooting them with his five flowery arrows, inciting lust and sensual desire (*kāma*) in them. In the *aprākṛta-dhāma* (transcendental abode of Goloka Vṛndāvana), the human-like sweetness (*mādhurya*) of the spiritual form of Lord Kṛṣṇa drives *krṣṇa-kāma*, the transcendental amorous desire of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The underlying cause (*cālaka*) of lust in this material world [Madana or the husband of Rati-devī in the heavenly planets who shoots living entities with five flowery arrows to incite lust in them] is our enemy, whereas the underlying cause of true love (*prema*) is Kṛṣṇa. The pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa cannot be

considered as obscene or vulgar; it is an offense to think so. Lord Kṛṣṇa alone is the enjoyer (*advitīya-bhoktā*), the ultimate truth (*parama-vāstava-satya*), and the Absolute Spiritual Controller (*niraṁkuśa-icchālaya-svarāṭ*). He is the Spiritual Despot and independent abode of unlimited (*niraṁkuśa*) desires.

Question 361—Does the system of faith and religion undergo gradual development?

Answer—Certainly. In the world of faith and religion, religious conceptions undergo step-by-step development through two paths. According to the ascending process, which is based on one's fallible sense perception, there is gradual development in attaining personal sense gratification and acquiring knowledge by one's mundane senses. According to the descending process, which is based on the realization that transcendental knowledge is beyond the reach of the mundane senses, one sincerely endeavors to satisfy the transcendental senses of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and to cultivate spiritual knowledge through aural reception in a disciplic succession. Atheism and lack of faith in the Supreme Controller increase to the degree that people engage in hedonistic practices and rely on knowledge acquired through their mundane senses, which are limited and fallible. When one gradually tries to satisfy the transcendental senses of Bhagavān, theism and faith in the existence and superiority of the Supreme Controller develop from incomplete to complete, and then from complete to supremely complete. The ascending process of acquiring sense gratification and mundane knowledge via the material senses progressively degrades through the following stages: (1) *nāstikya-vāda* (atheism); (2) *sandeha-vāda* (skepticism); (3) *ajñeyatā-vāda* (agnosticism); (4) *māyāvāda* (impersonalism); and (5) *śūnyavāda* (voidism). A *sādhaka* tries more and more to satisfy the transcendental senses of Bhagavān. As his

spiritual knowledge, which is beyond mundane sense perception, increases, he ponders the spiritual variety and sweet pastimes of the Absolute Truth. During his journey of discovery of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, first he abandons the conception of impersonal Brahman that is devoid of spiritual qualities and attributes, and the conception of unitary Lord Vāsudeva devoid of entourage and eternal associates. Then, he discovers progressively higher and sweeter varieties and conceptions of the object of service (*sevya-vastu*), including: (1) Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha, (2) Śrī Śrī Sītā-Rāmacandra in Sāketa-dhāma, (3) Lord Kṛṣṇa's manifestation as Dvārakādīśa or Rukmiṇīśa (worshipable husband of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī-devī in Dvārakā), and finally (4) Lord Kṛṣṇa's most complete and sweetest manifestation as Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda. Thus, a *sādhaka* progressively worships higher and superior objects of worship, one after the other.

People who only desire to satisfy their mundane senses have a distorted conception of the Absolute Truth. Due to their expanding pursuit of mundane sense gratification, they regard the transcendental pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda to be vulgar or obscene. They think that the conception of Lord Kṛṣṇa as husband and master of Śrīmatī Rukmiṇī-devī is superior to the conception of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Rādhānātha, the beloved consort of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Lord Kṛṣṇa, as master of Dvārakā, married and loved many queens. In contrast, Lord Rāmacandra, beloved consort and husband of Śrīmatī Sītādevī (also known as Jānakī, daughter of Śrī Janaka Mahārāja of Mithilā), accepted only one wife. He took a vow to not marry again, and He remained faithful to His wife. Only ignorant people regard the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra to be of higher morality than the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa in Dvārakā.

Such ignorant people also regard the pastimes

of Śrī Śrī Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa to be more pure and sublime than the pastimes of Lord Rāmacandra. Moreover, they regard the imaginary conception of unitary Vāsudeva, without a feminine counterpart, to be of higher moral value than the conception of a diverse Divinity, in which the Lord and His Potency are the Supreme Male and Supreme Female aspects. In reality, the conception of unitary Vāsudeva, or a Supreme Personality of Godhead devoid of spiritual potency, is the first step on the inauspicious path towards atheism or impersonalism. Such false beliefs, along with their desire to satisfy their senses at any cost, and their imperfect knowledge based on their fallible senses, lead them to the lower conception of Brahman devoid of transcendental qualities and attributes. In other words, they want to deny that the Over Soul, or Highest Conscious Being, has a constitutional nature of performing transcendental pastimes with His potencies and associates. In this way, they attempt to destroy His transcendental Personality. Gradually, the desire to satisfy their senses grows stronger. Then, due to complete reliance on knowledge acquired by their sense organs, they adopt the principles of atheistic religions such as Jainism and Buddhism. The excessive concern about morality and lack of teaching regarding God Consciousness that are characteristic of Jainism and Buddhism lead to denying the existence of a spiritual creation or transcendental world, and accepting only the existence of this mundane creation or material world. This idea may degrade further into the misconception that even this material world is a figment of our imagination, and that reality is void. Thus, the tendency to satisfy one's mundane senses degrades human intelligence to such a degree that one forgets the sacred desire to satisfy the transcendental senses of Bhagavān. In the end, this unquenchable thirst for personal sense gratification takes one into the bottomless pit (grave) of atheism.

The more a living entity avoids trying to satisfy the senses of Bhagavān and instead tries to satisfy his own senses, the further he progresses on the path of atheism.

Question 362—Does everyone have the right and qualification to engage in congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*)?

Answer—Certainly. The holy name of Lord Hari and Bhagavān Śrī Hari are not two separate substances; they are one and the same. The holy name (*śrī-nāma*) and the possessor of the holy name (*nāmī*) are non-different. Everyone is qualified to engage in congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtana*). Just as Lord Kṛṣṇa possesses all potencies, His holy name also has those potencies. The following considerations do not apply in performing congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*): only males, not females, can engage in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*); only one who is healthy, not sick, can engage in such devotional service; only the strong, not the weak, can engage in such devotional service. Also, “He is a child and I am old, so I will not glorify Lord Hari in his presence.” Also, “I am a scholar, so I will not glorify Lord Hari in the presence of foolish persons.” Also, “I belong to an aristocratic family, so I will not glorify Lord Hari in the presence of those born in a low-class family.” Such mentalities based on mental speculation and the bodily conception of life do not apply to the congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, which is the constitutional occupation of the soul. Also, it is not a consideration that one cannot chant the holy name of Lord Hari while passing urine or stool, or if one’s heart is full of sinful thoughts. One can chant the holy name of Lord Hari while passing urine or stool, and even if one has a sinful nature.

However, those who try to take shelter with the duplicitous mood that, “I will neutralize all of the sins that I commit now and in the future by chanting the holy name of Lord Hari,” actually cannot chant the holy name of Hari. One cannot actually chant the holy name of Lord Hari if one has the propensity to commit sins on the strength of chanting.

Question 363—How can a living entity, who is a minute particle of consciousness, serve Bhagavān, who is great and all-pervasive?

Answer—A living entity says, “I am a spiritual, not insentient, minute substance.” This minute living entity can serve the infinite Lord. One cannot say that a conscious living entity cannot serve the infinite Supreme Person, just because he is minute. For example, it is said that if a spark of fire finds sufficient fuel or material, it can burn the whole world.

Question 364—What is devotional service to Bhagavān (*sevā*)?

Answer—Activities that give happiness to the Supreme Lord and His Deity manifestation (Ṭhākura) constitute *sevā*, or favorable devotional service. An activity performed for one’s personal happiness and comfort is known as *bhoga*, or sense gratification. Bhagavān Śrī Hari approaches us in this world in two forms: (1) as *arcā-avatāra* (*vigraha* or Deity), and (2) as the holy name of Bhagavān (*nāma*). Only those who have faith in the Deity and in *nāma-avatāra* (the holy name) will attain auspiciousness.

One cannot serve Deities (*śrī-vigraha*) or glorify the holy names of Bhagavān (*śrī-nāma*) if one has the propensity to cheat. We cannot achieve auspiciousness without sincere service and without association with a pure devotee. One cannot perform devotional service by trying to cheat Bhagavān or His devotee. Actual service to Bhagavān and imitation of such service are two very different things. We should

make a special effort to perform proper devotional service to the Deity manifestation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The Deity is a direct manifestation of Bhagavān; that is why not everyone can serve the Deity. People who expect a salary or remuneration cannot properly worship or cook for the Deity. Only sincere servants who are devoid of duplicity can serve Bhagavān's Deity manifestation and His manifestation as the holy name. One cannot serve Bhagavān by requesting a salary; one should serve Him with love and affection, and with a willingness to sacrifice one's life for His service.

We cannot achieve auspiciousness until we develop the firm conviction that serving Lord Viṣṇu and His devotees (Vaiṣṇavas) is the best activity. Therefore, our primary duty is to serve the Deity with strong faith. We should serve the Deity and the holy name for the sake of giving happiness to Bhagavān. One cannot serve properly if one has another intention. Therefore, I request all of you: "O brothers! You should follow proper Vaiṣṇava etiquette and approved Vaiṣṇava customs, adhere to the exemplary code of conduct and ethos, follow good behavior, maintain clean habits, and serve Bhagavān for His pleasure." An external or outer appearance of auspiciousness may not be actual auspiciousness. There will be absolutely no benefit if one is duplicitous and artificially dresses as Śrī Nārada Muni, as if playing his role in a theatrical performance. One should sincerely perform Deity worship and loudly glorify Bhagavān's name to make Him happy; only then will one attain auspiciousness.

Question 365—Why are we unable to see Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—Lord Kṛṣṇa is the transcendental substance (*adhokṣāja-vastu*). Therefore, we cannot know Him by mundane knowledge acquired through sense perception. Lord Kṛṣṇa is not to be enjoyed by

anyone. He is the only enjoyer (*bhoktā*). Therefore, everyone is an object of His enjoyment (*bhogya*). Due to aversion to Lord Kṛṣṇa, our present mentality does not let us see Him. The illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa has two functions: (1) she does not let living entities see Lord Kṛṣṇa, and (2) she places Lord Kṛṣṇa far away from living entities. Only devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kārṣṇas*) can overcome both of these difficulties.

Residents of the village Kulīna-grāma asked Śrīman Mahāprabhu a question, and He replied, "Every living entity has three duties: (1) devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*), (2) service to devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kārṣṇa-sevā*), and (3) loud congregational chanting of the holy names of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*nāma-saṅkīrtana*). Bhagavān is the object of devotional service (*bhajanīya-vastu*), devotees (*bhaktas*) are the performers of devotional service (*bhajana-kārī*), and *bhakti* is the activities of devotional service. All three of these are *nitya*, or eternal. None of these can be realized unless one makes a one-pointed effort to serve the Lord. One cannot realize Bhagavān if one's endeavors are adulterated by the desire for sense gratification, the desire for liberation, or the desire to attain mystic perfections.

We may deceitfully say that we are worshipers of Lord Viṣṇu or servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but actually we are sense enjoyers and slaves of the senses. One should know that as long as a living entity does not develop a pure, unadulterated propensity to render devotional service to Bhagavān, that living entity has not received true knowledge of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The teachings and pastimes of Śrī Gaurasundara have not entered our heart; therefore, we are in a pitiable condition. We will remain cheated until we realize the universal truth that service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees is the only duty of a living entity. When we sincerely surrender to devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, we will be relieved from our foolish, ignorant mentality.

We can have a vision of Bhagavān only when our eyes are opened by the lotus hands of great personalities who always serve and worship Bhagavān. We can see Lord Kṛṣṇa and engage in pure devotional service to Him only when we serve great personalities who: (1) engage in devotional service to Bhagavān continuously, (2) serve Him in every possible way at all times, and (3) do nothing other than serve the Lord, having offered all of their possessions to Him.

When one has the good fortune to glorify Lord Hari by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva, who is a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Kṛṣṇa's manifestation as the congregational chanting of the holy name (*saṅkīrtana*) removes all of the obstacles and difficulties on his path, protects him, and grants him His audience, even though he may be unqualified.

A sense enjoyer cannot have a vision of Bhagavān, the supreme enjoyer. When one realizes, by the mercy of a devotee spiritual master, that he is an object of Lord Kṛṣṇa's enjoyment, and he makes service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees his only goal, he receives an audience with Bhagavān.

Tyāgīs (renunciants) reject both the material world and Bhagavān; therefore, they cannot have an audience with Him. Only devotees get an audience with Bhagavān through eyes of devotional service, which are bestowed upon them by a merciful spiritual master.

Question 366—How will we be protected?

Answer—The only way for us to get protection is to take shelter at the lotus feet of surrendered devotees of Bhagavān, who always discuss His pastimes and who are always dependent on Him. They are the saviors of the fallen (*patita-pāvana*) and friends of the lowly (*dīna-bandhu*). They will certainly protect us when we surrender to them.

Question 367—How will we realize Bhagavān?

Answer—Śrīman Mahāprabhu said that **living entities (*jīvas*) have only three duties to perform in life:(1) service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*), (2) service to devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kārṣṇa-sevā*), and (3) loud glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa's holy name (*nāma-kīrtana*).** The object (*vastu*) which is served is *nitya-sevya* (eternal object of service or object meant to be served eternally), and those who serve are servants (*sevakas*). The activity or function (*vṛtti*) of a servant is service (*sevā*) or devotion (*bhakti*). The Supreme Personality of Godhead (Bhagavān) is the object of devotional service (*bhajanīya-vastu*), the devotee (*bhakta*) is the performer of loving worship (*bhajana*), and the propensity (*vṛtti*) to engage in loving worship is devotional service. All of these three are eternal (*nitya*). These three—the devotee or *bhakta*, the Supreme Lord or *bhajanīya-vastu*, and devotional service or *bhakti*—cannot be disturbed by the time factor (*kāla*). Unlike things made from the five material elements of earth, water, fire, air, and ether, they are not subject to birth (*janma*), maintenance or preservation (*sthiti*), and annihilation (*pralaya*). These three cannot be attained or realized unless one makes an unalloyed effort (*avimiśrā-ceṣṭā*) to serve the Lord. One cannot attain the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*bhagavad-vastu*) by mixed endeavors (*miśrā-ceṣṭā*), or through knowledge leading to impersonal liberation (*jñāna*) or reward-seeking activity (*karma*), which are devoid of devotional service.

If we do not choose the path of eternal auspiciousness (*śreyaḥ-patha*) and do not remain busy serving Bhagavān all of the time, we will take the path towards hell (*naraka*) by considering *preyaḥ-patha*, activity which is immediately beneficial but not ultimately auspicious, as best. We are hypocritically

and deceitfully proclaiming to the entire world that we are worshipers of Lord Viṣṇu and servants of Lord Kṛṣṇa, but in reality we are slaves of the senses (*indriyas*). We are servants of wives, sons, and daughters. We are inactive and neglectful of our prescribed duties (*akarmī*), and we are sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*). We should know that we have not developed even an iota of knowledge about Bhagavān as long as the propensity to render pure, unalloyed (*avimiśrā*) or selfless service to Bhagavān does not arise in our heart. We are facing so many adverse situations because the mercy of Śrī Gaurasundara has not entered our heart; therefore, so many evil desires arise in our heart.

As long as we do not realize that service to Lord Kṛṣṇa and His devotees is our only duty, we will remain cheated. How can we become free from our wicked mentality (*durbuddhi*)? It is only by taking shelter of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and becoming sincere and free from duplicity.

We have to take shelter of those who continually worship Bhagavān. Such dedicated persons will open our eyes using their hands, and only then will it be possible for us to see Bhagavān. If someone is dressed or disguised as Nārada in a play but we consider him as the real Nārada; or if we mistake limewater (solution of calcium hydroxide in water used as an antacid) to be milk, we will be cheated. We have to serve great personalities who always endeavor to serve Bhagavān, and who serve Him completely at every step. Only service to such a great person can lead to pure devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*śuddha-kṛṣṇa-bhajana*), and also to realizing Him.

As long as we are driven by mental speculation and engrossed in sensory pleasures, we are covered by material forms (*rūpa*) and feelings (*rasa*), and thus we cannot attain Bhagavān. Kṛṣṇa is the personal property of devotees; therefore, only

devotees can give Lord Kṛṣṇa. A heart that is inclined to engage in sense gratification cannot realize Bhagavān. It is possible to realize Lord Kṛṣṇa only in a heart that is inclined to render devotional service. Considering ourselves to be servants of Bhagavān, we should serve Him all of the time. While doing so, we can attain realization and profound knowledge (*prakṛṣṭa-jñāna*) of the object of service—He who always takes service from the servants. It is possible to have *darśana* (vision) of *sevya-bhagavān*, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the object of service, by following the path of devotion (*bhakti-patha*) or service (*sevā-patha*); it is not possible by any other means.

Question 368—What is the meaning of *kṛṣṇa-prapti* (attaining Lord Kṛṣṇa)?

Answer—*Kṛṣṇa-prāpti* means to become completely detached from this material world (*jaḍa-jagata*). One receives *darśana* (vision) of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the heart after one is liberated (*mukta*); this is known as *kṛṣṇa-prāpti*. Of all things to be attained, Lord Kṛṣṇa is best; He is the ultimate object of attainment. One attains Lord Kṛṣṇa only through love. *Binā prema nāhiṁ mile nanda-lālā*—it is not possible to attain the son of Nanda Mahārāja without love of Godhead (*prema*).

Question 369—How does Lord Kṛṣṇa appear?

Answer—Every living entity's heart has feelings of pure consciousness (*śuddha-cetana-bhāva*). When Śrī Bhagavān, who has full consciousness (*pūrṇa-cetana*), manifests completely in one's pure heart, we regard that as His appearance (*āvirbhāva*). In other words, the appearance of Lord Kṛṣṇa in one's pure consciousness (*śuddha-citta*) is His birth (*kṛṣṇa-janma*). Presently, we are fully absorbed in inert sense objects (*jaḍa-viṣaya*). Only if

we can somehow eliminate our acquired nature of attachment to dull matter (*jaḍa-bhāva*), our false conception of being the doer (*kartā-abhimāna*), and our attachment to sense objects (*viṣaya-āsakti*) can we get rid of our mentality (*buddhi*) of measuring and be released from conditioned life in material existence (*saṁsāra*).

Question 370—Is Bhagavān inconceivable (*acintya*)?

Answer—While it is true that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is inconceivable, He is conceivable to one who is inclined to render service (*sevonmukha-cintya*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is transcendental and devoid of material qualities (*nirguṇa*); He is the Supreme Being who is endowed with all transcendental qualities (*guṇa-ātmā*). He is an ocean of auspicious qualities that are abounding in blessings and prosperity. His qualities are all spiritual and beyond the illusory material qualities; He is free from the material modes (*nirguṇa*). All transcendental qualities are present in Him. He alone is the basis of the whole world. The material world is not His personal form (*mūrti*); rather, He may appear within the material world in His personal form.

Objects (*vastu*) perceived through knowledge acquired by the mundane sense organs (*indriya-jñāna*) are meant for sense gratification (*bhoga*). The material world is not Lord Kṛṣṇa; rather, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the basis (*ādhāra*) of the material world. As long as we do not offer obeisances or respects (*praṇāma*) to Him, and as long as we do not give up our false ego, we cannot approach Him. Śrī Hari is the supreme spiritual substance or the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*brahma-vastu*); He has no limitations (*sīmā*). Therefore, we cannot measure Him or think that He can be divided into smaller portions.

Question 371—From whom should we hear *hari-kathā*?

Answer—We should hear *hari-kathā* (narrations of the holy names, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates) only from the mouth of devotees of Lord Hari (*hari-bhaktas*). When we hear about the powerful topics of Bhagavān from the lotus mouth of saintly persons who always serve Him, we can understand His greatness and glories (*mahimā*). Our mind will become resolute and develop unflinching faith when we listen to *hari-kathā* from the lotus mouth of effulgent, powerful, illustrious (*tejasvī*) saintly persons, and we dedicate our heart and soul to them. As a result of doing so, we gradually go through the following stages.

(1) *Śraddhā*—firm conviction that all of one's obligations are fulfilled by performing devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*).

(2) *Rati* or *bhāva-bhakti*—transcendental emotion that is compared to the first ray of the *prema*-sun appearing in the heart of a *bhakti-sādhaka*, and that marks the end of the stage of *sādhana*.

(3) *Prema-bhakti*—pure love for Lord Kṛṣṇa which is the highest or perfectional stage in the progressive development of pure devotional service.

In this way our life will become successful, and the power of the external world will not be able to defeat us.

Question 372—Who is a real (*asalī*) saintly person (*sādhu*)?

Answer—One cannot be a *sādhu* simply by having large dreadlocks or matted hair, adorning oneself as a renunciant or hermit (*tyāgī*), or becoming a householder of very high status. One who is always busy discussing the holy name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is indeed a *sādhu*. Devotees constantly strive to satisfy Bhagavān; all of their activities are meant for His pleasure. Such

devotees are real saintly persons.

What is *hari-kathā*? *Hari-kathā* refers to the glorification of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, which brings joy and happiness to Him. A person for whom *hari-kathā* is very life—someone who cannot live without it—is considered a *sādhu*. His *hari-kathā* bestows happiness upon Lord Kṛṣṇa. This *sādhu* engages in *hari-kathā* solely to please Lord Kṛṣṇa, with a heart free from the false ego of being the doer (*kartā*) or speaker (*vaktā*). Such an advanced devotee has developed a true sense of identity as an eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa and is always immersed in His loving devotional service.

In contrast, *karmīs* (fruitive workers), *jñānīs* (those who pursue the path of *jñāna*, or knowledge, directed toward impersonal liberation), and *yogīs* (disguised sense gratifiers who practice the *yoga* system with the goal of realizing the Supersoul or merging into the Lord's personal body) do not qualify as *sādhus*. Only a true devotee can be recognized as a *sādhu*.

Question 373—Is the body of a devotee a temple of Bhagavān?

Answer—The body of a living entity is a temple of Bhagavān; that temple is conscious or sentient. In a temple constructed from bricks, stones, and wood, there are *lepyā arcā-vigraha*(Deities made of clay, sandalwood, and other substances laid down as a paste) or *lekhyā arcā-vigraha*(paintings of Bhagavān). Inside the temples of the spiritual bodies (*cinmaya-deha*) of devotees of Bhagavān, Śrī Bhagavān is always present. When devotees accept and honor *mahā-prasāda* (remnants of food offered to the Deity), it is for the purpose of maintaining Bhagavān's temple.

Question 374—Who is qualified to properly recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?

Answer—Exalted devotees regard service to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to be their only duty and their very life. They serve Lord Hari at every step, with every morsel of food and every breath. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is directly *bhagavad-vastu* (the absolute truth concerning Śrī Bhagavān).*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is not an object of trade, but it is the object of service (*sevya-vastu*) or worshipable object (*upāsya-vastu*). Those who recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* for a salary or as part of a contract (*ṭhekā*) can never recite it in the real sense. Therefore, we should always pay attention to whether a speaker of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is sincerely serving Bhagavān twenty-four hours a day without duplicity, or is engaged in other activities. **A stipend holder or a contractor can not explain Bhagabat. First of all refrain from approaching the professional priest. See whether he devotes his time fully to the Bhagabat or not.**

One cannot properly recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* simply by being an expert scholar in reciting the *Purāṇas* (*purāṇa-tīrtha*). ***Bhaktyā bhāgavataṁ grāhyaṁ na buddhyā na ca ṭīkayā***—one can properly recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* only through devotion, and not by one's intelligence or by studying commentaries. One who recites *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* should be a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhāgavata*). If one poses as a speaker of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* but one is greedy for wealth, hankers for prestige, or has any other type of worldly attraction, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is actually very far from him. A person's heart cannot be attracted to Bhagavān, who is real, eternal substance (*vāstava-satya-vastu*), by hearing discourses of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from such a person.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam cannot be properly recited or commented on by one who is not a pure devotee of Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa (*bhāgavata*), and whose life does not follow the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam*. Such a person is cheated or deceived;

therefore, although he may pretend to recite *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* he simply cheats or deceives others.

The relationship between a listener (*śrotā*) and a reciter of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (*bhāgavata-pāṭhaka*) is not the same as the relationship between a student and a teacher or lecturer in schools and colleges. An excellent teacher is one who can properly explain any particular subject matter to students. It does not matter whether a teacher lives his life according to the teachings he is imparting to students; this does not apply to speakers of *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam.* Such speakers are preachers who should exhibit exemplary conduct and practice what they preach. The scriptures state:

āpani ācari dharma jīvera sikhāya
āpane nā kaile dharma śikhāna nā jāya

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta*)

That is, a devotee who acts as an *ācārya* teaches living entities by his personal example; one cannot truly educate others unless one personally practices what one preaches. One of bad character who has lust and desire for prestige or wealth in his heart can never deliver an effective discourse on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*; he simply tries to satisfy his own senses on the pretext of reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Question 375—What type of *guru* (spiritual master) should we take shelter of?

Answer—When one is fortunate, one gets shelter of a spiritual master who performs devotional service to Lord Hari all of the time. We should take shelter of the lotus feet of such a spiritual master, who is engaged 100% in serving Bhagavān. Otherwise, we cannot remain engaged 100% in serving Bhagavān according to his high ideal (*ādarśa*).

A licentious platform speaker or professional priest cannot be a *guru*. If due to misfortune one accepts such a person as a spiritual master, he

cannot engage in devotional service to Lord Hari. Such an imitation spiritual master cannot bestow auspiciousness on us. A spiritual master should be selfless and devoid of material desires. He has conquered his senses. He is knowledgeable in the scriptures (*śāstra-jña*) and he has realization (*anubhūti*) of Bhagavān.

The scriptures (*śāstras*) state:

tasmād guruṁ prapadyeta
jijñāsuḥ śreyaḥ uttamam
śābde pare ca niṣṇātaṁ
brahmaṇyupaśamāśrayam

(*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.3.21)

Translation: Inquisitive *sādhaka*s must take shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master in order to understand what is auspicious for them. A bona fide spiritual master must be expert in the conclusions of the *Vedas* (*śrutis*) and other scriptures (*śabda-brahma*). He should be proficient in knowledge of Parabrahman. He must have realization of the Supreme Lord, who is beyond the reach of the mundane senses. He should not be subjugated or overwhelmed by any material distress.

Question 376—How do the perspectives of *preyaḥ-panthī* and *śreyaḥ-panthī* differ?

Answer—*Śreyaḥ-kathā* includes topics related to spiritual welfare and auspiciousness. *Preyaḥ-kathā* includes topics related to material sense gratification. Many times, *śreyaḥ-kathā* may not be easy or pleasant to hear (*hṛt-karṇa-rasāyana*), whereas *preyaḥ-kathā* is always palatable for conditioned souls. Listeners (*śrotā*) often think that speakers should only talk about palatable topics, but *śreya-panthī* persons (persons aspiring for the welfare and auspiciousness of their own selves or souls) think that they should hear about topics concerning the Absolute Truth which do not involve any material motives, even if such topics may be distasteful to their

current conditioned mind.

Preyaḥ-panthī people always search for their personal pleasure and happiness. However, *śreyaḥ-panthī* people are always totally devoted to endeavors to please Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Preyaḥ-panthī* people do not follow in the footsteps of Śrī Vyāsadeva, whereas *śreyaḥ-panthī* people only follow the path shown by the *mahājanas*. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ*—in other words, *śreyaḥ-panthī* people believe that only the opinion of the *mahājanas* is meaningful, essential, and superior (*sāra*). *Śreyaḥ-panthī* people are *śrauta-panthī* or *avaroha-vādī*, whereas *preyaḥ-panthī* people are *aśrauta-panthī* or *āroha-vādī.*

Question 377—What is real charity (*paropakāra*)?

Answer—An infinite number of living entities have turned away from Lord Viṣṇu and fallen into this jail (*durga*) of *mahā-māyā* due to envying Him in infinite ways. [**Note:***mahā-māyā* is material nature, the external potency of the Supreme Lord, which bewilders conditioned living entities. She is personified as Durgā-devī.] We must endeavor to save at least one of these entrapped persons from the clutches of *mahā-māyā* by directing him towards Lord Kṛṣṇa. The rescue of just one person from the prison of *mahā-māyā* is an act of infinitely greater charity than establishing countless hospitals and schools. If I am a resident of Bhārata-varṣa (India), it is necessarily my duty to see to the interest (*svārtha*) of Bhārata-varṣa from my temporary, selfish ego (*anitya-abhimāna*). If I take birth in a foreign country, then it is my duty to perform activities that are favorable to the interest of that particular country, although such activities may be opposed to the interests of Bhārata-varṣa. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His devotees do not exhibit such petty sectarian views that depend on country, time, or person, which are born of materialistic considerations. Śrī Caitanya

Mahāprabhu and His devotees strive for the real welfare of a country; they show ideal dedication to a country (*deśa-bhakti* or patriotism). Their absolute welfare activities do not involve short-term (*sāmayika*) benefits, and they are not beneficial to one person and harmful to another. All countries and living entities, at all times, can receive the fruit of Mahāprabhu's and His devotees' welfare activity or service. These are not just idle words; this is the highest truth.

Flatterers are not real teachers, spiritual masters, or preachers. Those who speak according to the opinions of numerous types of sick people in order to achieve fame or serve their own selfish agenda, or who advise others to seek only short-term or temporary benefits (*preyaḥ*), are not concerned with real auspiciousness for others. Rather, their mentality is opposed to that of those who always contemplate auspiciousness for others. One should not listen to talks (*kathā*) from such people, which will lead to inauspiciousness for oneself and others, and to total ruination (*sarva-nāśa*).

Question 378—Is the mind deceitful (*viśvāsa-ghātaka*)?

Answer—Certainly; it will destroy us completely as soon as it gets the opportunity. This deranged (*pāgala*) or rogue (*badamāśa*) mind has great taste for being a slave (*dāsa*) to lust and anger. This rascal mind assumes the position of a preacher (*upadeṣṭā*) in order to engage inhabitants of the material world in serving lust and anger, or serving *māyā*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa which deludes a living entity into forgetfulness of the Supreme Lord. This mind, which is oblivious to Lord Kṛṣṇa due to being focused outwardly toward the material world (*bahirmukha-mana*), is always busy creating animosity toward Lord Hari, the spiritual master, and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas). That

is why we should not listen to the mind, and instead listen to saintly persons (*sādhus*), spiritual masters, and the scriptures (*śāstras*).

Question 379—Why do all people not listen to *satya-kathā*, topics about the Absolute Truth?

Answer—It is absolutely true that many people in the world do not accept *satya-kathā* because it is spiritually auspicious (*śreyaḥ*), not palatable for materialistic persons (*preyaḥ*).

Many unscrupulous preachers have 'eaten the heads' (ruined the lives) of people in this world by declaring themselves to be religious leaders (*dharma-vīra*) or experts in public welfare (*karma-vīra*). Therefore, we have to spend hundreds of gallons of blood to convince the people of this world. Unfortunately, very few people are able to grasp topics about the pure, unadulterated truth. Unless one has good spiritual impressions from past lives or this life (*saṁskāras*), or has good fortune (*bhāgya*), the desire to hear about Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Absolute Truth (*satya-kathā* or *kṛṣṇa-kathā*) cannot awaken in the heart.

Śreyaḥ, activities that lead to ultimate auspiciousness, and *preyaḥ*, activities that bring immediate or short-term benefit or satisfaction but not ultimate auspiciousness, are both available to human beings. The wise (*buddhimāna-vyakti*) and pious (*sajjana-vyakti*) know the truth (*tattva*) about both kinds of activities, and they know that *śreyaḥ* is the cause of liberation, while *preyaḥ* is the cause of bondage. Only fortunate people give up *preyaḥ* and take shelter of *śreyaḥ*. Those who are unwise and less intelligent, and who are devoid of the sense of proper discrimination (*viveka*), pray for things that they do not have (*yoga*), and endeavor to protect what they have (*kṣema*). The scriptures tell us that very few people are willing to hear about topics that are ultimately beneficial and auspicious (*śreyaḥ-*

kathā). Although some may listen to *śreyaḥ-kathā*, many cannot understand it. Expert speakers who are conversant with the truth about *śreya-viṣaya*, spiritually beneficial and auspicious subject matter, are extremely rare. Those who, by the mercy of Bhagavān, hear from such an expert spiritual instructor or *ācārya* and follow in his footsteps are even rarer.

The countless speakers who are not devoid of material motives and attachments (*nirapekṣa*) will go to hell. One must fearlessly speak about the Absolute Truth (*satya-kathā*) without any material motives or attachments, and in this way, after hundreds of births, someone will hear one's *satya-kathā* and certainly be able to understand it. One cannot explain *satya-kathā* to even a single person unless one spends hundreds of gallons of blood in great pain and hard labor.

Question 380—Is Śrī Caitanyadeva the only worshipable Lord (Ṭhākura) of Bengalīs (residents of Bengal)?

Answer—Śrī Kṛṣṇa-caitanya-deva is directly (*sākṣāt*) Bhagavān; He is the Supreme Lord of the whole universe. Nanda-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra, the son of Śrī Nanda Maharāja, has descended in the form of Śrī Caitanya-deva for the welfare and auspiciousness of the whole world.

Thus, He is the worshipable Deity of everyone in the world; what more is there to say? I am saying that Śrī Caitanya-deva is the worshipable Lord not just of Bengalīs, but of every human being. He is the Ṭhākura of all living entities (*jīvas*) who reside in the material universe. He is the worshipable Lord of even demigods such as Brahmā and Śiva. He is the Supreme Personality and Enjoyer (*parama* Puruṣottama), and the Supreme Lord (*Parameśvara-vastu*).

Question 381—How does one achieve success in spiritual life (*paramārtha-jagata*) while striving for unalloyed love for Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prema*), the highest attainment?

Answer—There is nothing other than Bhagavān. Those who think that something other than Bhagavān exists are disturbed followers of 'broken' religion (*khaṇḍita-dharma*) that is devoid of self-realization. ***Sadaiva saumyamidamagramāsīt ekam evādvitīyam***—factual substance (*vastu*) is not ten or five; there is only one factual substance. [**Note:** here *advitīya* means that among many things, Lord Kṛṣṇa is the one unparalleled Supreme Truth]. Absolute Truth is only one without a second. Those who think that Absolute Truth is challengeable will not be successful. We are worshipers of Personal Godhead; we are not worshipers of Impersonality. Our success is inevitable because we have taken refuge in such a Bhagavān. Worshipers of *sa-viśeṣa viṣṇu-vastu*, Lord Viṣṇu who has a beautiful form and unique spiritual attributes, can understand Brajendra-nandana, the son of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja who is the Supreme Enjoyer and object of the devotee's love and affection (*viṣaya-vigraha*);the verse *sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate* of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is evidence for this. Worshipers of Lord Kṛṣṇa teach living entities by personally following the path of devotional service (*bhakti-dharma*); only they can experience Him. *Ācāryavān puruṣo veda*—he who takes shelter of a bona fide spiritual master comes to know that Supreme Personality who is described in the *Vedas*; this *Upaniṣad mantra* sings this truth. We should accept the shelter and blessings of *viṣaya-vigraha* Śrī Kṛṣṇa (recipient of devotional service) and the lotus feet (*pāda-padma*) of a spiritual master (Śrī Guru), who is *āśraya-vigraha* (reservoir of devotional service). Their shelter and blessings will certainly make us successful in 'placing our feet on the head of' (overcoming) innumerable obstacles. Servants

who have taken shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master (Śrī Guru-pāda-padma) never fail to achieve their wishes.

Communities of non-devotees certainly fall down by the influence of the time factor (*kāla*), whereas devotees of Bhagavān never fall down. Only non-devotees fall down. Groups of hypocrites that practice deceitful devotion (*kapaṭa-bhakti*) and mental speculationists also fall down.

Question 382—Why are we not able to have *darśana* (vision) of Lord Kṛṣṇa?

Answer—It is not possible to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa or have His *darśana* if one does not first have *darśana* of the lotus feet of a spiritual master. We are unable to have *darśana* of Lord Kṛṣṇa because we are not properly hearing *hari-kathā* from the mouth of a spiritual master (*guru*). If we listen properly, then *kīrtana* can also be performed nicely. When *kīrtana* is done nicely, we will be able to remember Lord Kṛṣṇa nicely, and He will manifest in our heart. We will have to offer all of our wealth and possessions to the lotus feet of our spiritual master. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself becomes *āśraya-vigraha* (receptacle of love for Kṛṣṇa) and manifests before fortunate living entities in the form of a spiritual master. Therefore, first we should take shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master. In other words, first we will have to become small and insignificant (*laghu*). This alone is known as taking shelter (*āśraya*). We will certainly have to take shelter. If I do not take shelter, what will happen? One attains shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master only by the desire of Bhagavān. Everything will happen only when we receive the mercy of Bhagavān. If one does not receive His mercy, nothing will happen despite making hundreds of endeavors. His mercy is our main object. If our heart is sincere, eager, and without duplicity, and we are truly seeking Him, certainly we will receive His mercy. After we

accept a bona fide spiritual master by a stroke of good fortune, it is helpful for us to observe how he properly serves Lord Kṛṣṇa with all of his senses. [After we are fortunate enough to get an authentic spiritual master, it is beneficial for us to observe how he serves Lord Kṛṣṇa in the appropriate manner, utilizing all of his senses.] If a living entity does not properly follow the teachings of Śrī Gurudeva even after hearing them from his lotus mouth, what can he do other than sense gratification? If one becomes more attached to worldly matters, one cannot hear *hari-kathā*. If one does not properly hear *hari-kathā*, one will not attain auspiciousness.

Question 383—Does one continue to see superficial sense objects (*laghu-darśana*) even after seeing a spiritual master (*guru-darśana*)?

Answer—Never. If one develops the ego of being a spiritual master (*guru*) or being superior (*śreṣṭha*) to others, one cannot truly see a superior personality like a spiritual master. In such a condition, although a living entity is small and insignificant, he develops a desire to be a great spiritual master. As a result, instead of truly seeing a spiritual master, a living entity sees enjoyable objects such as women (*yoṣit*), and the misconception that this world is meant for his sense gratification (*bhogya-darśana*) becomes strong. This leads to total ruination of the living entity.

If one has genuine *guru-darśana*, one sees one's spiritual master everywhere, and sees everything as worshipable like one's spiritual master. At that time, there is no longer any *laghu-darśana*. Everything appears blue when one wears blue glasses; similarly, when one has *guru-darśana* and receives transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*), the mood arises that everyone is worthy of worship (*pūjya*) and reverence (*pūjya-buddhi, guru-buddhi,* or *guru-jñāna*). This material world is an instrument (*upakaraṇa*) for serving Lord Jagadīśa, the Supreme

Lord of the whole world; in other words, it is a servant of Lord Jagadīśa. Therefore, this world is worthy of my reverence and worship. Certainly, one will easily and naturally get vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-darśana*) when one's vision of one's spiritual master becomes very intense (*prabala*).

A mother (*jananī*) who is meant to be enjoyed by a father is worthy of my worship and service. Similarly, this world is a servant of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the father and master of the whole world; it is meant to be enjoyed by Him. Thus, this world is worthy of my worship, service, and reverence.

If one actually takes shelter at the lotus feet of a spiritual master and serves him, one will certainly get transcendental knowledge about Lord Kṛṣṇa and serving Him (*dīkṣā*).

We must limit our activities such that we do not see materialistic persons (*viṣayī*) or the female body (*yoṣit*). Then we can maintain the mood that all women actually belong to Lord Kṛṣṇa and are meant for His enjoyment, and in this way they are worthy of worship and reverence. Once the misconception that 'I am an enjoyer of women' is dispelled, only then the propensity to render unalloyed devotional service to Bhagavān arises. Only then will one have a complete vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and only then will the idea that 'I am a husband' be completely dispelled. If even after having *darśana* of the lotus feet of a spiritual master (Guru-pāda-padma) one sees a female body, it should be understood that one has fallen down. [If, even after having *darśana* of the lotus feet of a spiritual master (Guru-pāda-padma), one views the body of a member of the opposite or same sex as an object of enjoyment, it should be understood that one has fallen from grace.] Then, a *sādhaka* (practitioner) will develop the wicked mentality of decorating himself as a spiritual master, and he will meet with total ruination. Therefore, I say to those who want auspiciousness that they should firmly take shelter at

the lotus feet of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and sacrifice their lives in service to a spiritual master; only then will they certainly attain auspiciousness. A devotee who is dedicated to his spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha bhakta*) never falls down, and he will certainly reach the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 384—What is the duty of a householder?

Answer—In order to bestow happiness on Bhagavān, householder devotees should associate with saintly persons and spiritual masters, and serve them with respect and love. Only then will they achieve the qualification to become transcendental householders. Householder devotees should serve both *bhakta-bhāgavata* (great devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa) and *grantha-bhāgavata* (the scripture *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*). They must associate with *bhakta-bhāgavata* and discuss topics from *grantha-bhāgavata.* Otherwise, they can never achieve auspiciousness. They must reside at home with the resolution: "I shall fully engage in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa." A home devoid of service to Lord Hari is nothing but a wide-open gate to hell. Householder life (*gṛhastha-āśrama*) is worth accepting and commendable only if it is favorable for rendering devotional service to Lord Hari. If householder life is unfavorable and opposed to devotional service, it should be forsaken like a dangerous 'blind' well (a hidden dry well in a forest in which one may be trapped and injured). It is the same for transcendental personalities who are dedicated to devotional service to stay at home or in a monastery. [Transcendental personalities dedicated to devotional service can remain equally devoted whether they stay at home or reside in a monastery.] A person attached to household life (*gṛha-vratī*, one who has taken a vow to execute family duties) stays at home. Householder devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa also stay at home, but their

household life is different from that of *gṛha-vratī* nondevotees. Attachment to household life and the vow to execute family duties can be destroyed by associating with and serving pure devotees who have made their spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa their very life. Serving a spiritual master without duplicity is the only means of becoming free from attachment to household and family life. One in household life should serve Lord Kṛṣṇa under the guidance of a spiritual master. Devotees seeking the transcendental goal of human life (*kṛṣṇa-prema*) must always stay away from the following. (1) *atyāhāra*—eating too much or collecting more than necessary; (2) *prayāsa* —endeavoring for that which is opposed to *bhakti*; (3) *prajalpa*—engaging in useless mundane talk; (4) *niyamāgraha*—failing to adopt essential rules and regulations, or fanatically adhering to rules and regulations; (5) *jana-saṅga*—taking bad association; and (6) *laulya*—being greedy or restless in the mind to adopt worthless opinions. Householder devotees must exhibit enthusiasm, fortitude, firm faith, taste for hearing and speaking about Lord Hari, and dedication to serving the spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa.

They must forsake illicit sex, excessive attachment to spouse (*straiṇa-bhāva*), and unfavorable association (such as with *māyāvādīs*, atheists, and pseudo-religionists). The duty of *pāramārthika-gṛhasthas* (householders aspiring for the spiritual goal of *kṛṣṇa-prema*) is to control the urges of speech, mind, anger, belly, and genitals. [In other words, they must tolerate the impetus to speak, the agitation of the mind, the onset of anger, the urge of the belly, and the agitation of the genitals].

Householder devotees should avoid sinful activities. In addition, they must be wary of pious activities that cause obstacles in devotional service (*bhakti*). One cannot engage in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) if one engages in sinful activities. Moreover, if one develops a desire to

accumulate pious merit (*puṇya*), one cannot engage in devotional service to Lord Hari. Householder devotees should be careful not to become indifferent to serving Lord Hari, the spiritual master (*guru*), and devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) by only pretending to chant the holy name. For a householder devotee, doing so is nothing but duplicitous behavior. If they do so, they will gradually become attached to material existence characterized by the cycle of death and rebirth (*saṁsāra*). Living entities cannot develop love and affection for Bhagavān unless they serve a spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa. Householder devotees should constantly endeavor to serve great personalities who are always fully dedicated to serving Lord Kṛṣṇa and who have renounced all material possessions.

Question 385—Is it our duty to construct a monastery (*maṭha*) and stay in it?

Answer—Instead of endeavoring to build a monastery and stay comfortably in it, it would be a sign of intelligence to attempt to create a 'living monastery' (*jīvanta-maṭha*, devotee). [**Note:** Students of *bhakti* are educated about various topics such as the spiritual master, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, worship of Tulasī-devī, and the importance of fasting on Ekādaśī. These students receive education from a spiritual master and senior Vaiṣṇavas, and they actively engage in door-to-door outreach, educating the masses about the significance of chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra* and observing Ekādaśī fasting. Thus, these students are invaluable resources for spreading the principles of *sanātana-dharma* everywhere. Preaching is life, and lethargy is death. A monastery must regularly conduct *nagara-saṅkīrtana* (public chanting) and distribute spiritual literature to those who are interested. A *mṛdaṅga* is a type of drum made from clay. Spiritual books may be referred to as *bṛhad-*

mṛdaṅga because they can be sent across even continents. Saintly devotees may be called 'living *mṛdaṅgas*' (*jīvanta-mṛdaṅgas*) because they actively preach the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.]

Attracting even one faithful person to the lotus feet of a spiritual master (Śrī Gurudeva) is the only way to create a 'living monastery.' The most auspicious duty is to explain the glories of a spiritual master and the glories of serving him to living entities so that they will be attracted to his lotus feet. The spiritual master and Lord Kṛṣṇa will certainly be pleased with us if we spend gallons of blood for the spiritual upliftment and advancement of living entities. It is the sign of the highest intelligence and wisdom to accept the solemn vow of performing this service of preaching by one's body, mind, and words for the auspiciousness of the whole world.

A monastery surcharged with dedication to Lord Hari (*hari-sevā*), and resounding with sweet, loud glorification of Lord Hari (*hari-kīrtana*), is indeed the anxiety-less spiritual world (Vaikuṇṭha). Therefore, residence in a monastery (*maṭha-vāsa*) is synonymous with residence in the holy abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*dhāma-vāsa*). Vigorous discussions of pastimes and topics of Lord Hari (*hari-kathā*) must go on in a monastery. There is no benefit at all if a monastery is constructed only for eating and living. Construction of a monastery is needed for preaching pastimes and topics of Lord Hari. Only such preaching of the glories of Lord Hari will bring auspiciousness to both oneself and others.

A devotee dedicated to his spiritual master (*guru-niṣṭha bhakta*) is a *jīvanta-sādhu* or living source of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. We should hear *hari-kathā* only from such living saintly persons; in this way, we can become *guru-devatātmā* [persons who consider *śrī guru* to be their *devatā* or worshipful Lord, and to be as dear as their very *ātmā* or soul].

One who is not dedicated to, and is not

serving, a spiritual master is dead, although he seems to be alive (*jīvanmṛta*). One should not associate with such a non-devotee; doing so will bring inauspiciousness.

Question 386—Is the spiritual master's mercy the only means to get Bhagavān's mercy?

Answer—Only by the mercy of Śrī Guru-Nityānanda can we receive instructions about chanting the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the *mantra* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and eternal auspiciousness (*nitya-maṅgala*). One cannot get the mercy of Śrī Gauracandra and Śrī Rādhā-Govinda without the mercy of Śrī Guru-Nityānanda. Our predecessor spiritual master Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura has written about this. Only by the mercy of Śrī Gurudeva can the material bondage of a living entity be terminated, and can he attain the wealth of divine love (*prema-sampatti*).

Śrī Guru-pāda-padma (the lotus feet of Śrīla Gurudeva), who is nondifferent from Nityānanda, teaches us about devotional service. He is a confidential associate of Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva. One attains perfection by serving Guru Nityānanda with respect and love.

Those whose heart has become hard due to worldly attachments cannot purely chant the name of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who destroys sins. If we attentively hear the holy name of Lord Hari from the mouth of our spiritual master, *nāma-prabhu* will certainly enliven us. When Śrī Gurudeva sees my *dainya* (humility) and *ārti* (distress and eagerness), he will certainly shower mercy on me, and then *śrī hari-kīrtana* (glorification of Lord Hari) will emanate from my mouth with great power.

Question 387—O Prabhu, will you go to Guṇḍicā temple?

Answer—Guṇḍicā is in the heart of human

beings. When one's heart is cleansed, Bhagavān enters it. [When the mirror of one's heart is cleansed, it becomes a suitable place for Bhagavān's residence.] I have no desire to enter this Guṇḍicā of your thoughts and ideology, because up to now I have not been able to cleanse the temple of my heart. My false ego of being male (*puruṣa-abhimāna*) and master has become stronger, and as a result I have become hopeless. My firm hope of attaining Bhagavān (*āśā-bandha*) has diminished. I love the company of insincere people, so I meet them only; I have no intention to come in contact with Sri Rupa and Sri Sanatana. I respectfully invite my own misfortune. As long as our body remains, we will be immersed in an ocean of problems. That is why we often think: "Let us be metamorphosed into Charvakism." Discomforts come by Bhagavān's mercy, but we do not understand this; that is why we want to go home. The lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa are our eternal home; the eternal health of the soul is situated there.

[**Note:** Atheists like Cārvāka consider the *ātmā* to be temporary like the gross body and say that it does not exist after death. According to Cārvāka, this material world is *kāma-haitukam*, born from the flow of lust between male and female.

Demons, who rely on their sense perception, are of two types, depending on gross and subtle inclinations. Those who have gross intelligence are attached to the gross body. By their so-called welfare work (*jīva-dayā*) in the form of serving the perishable gross body, a bag of bone and flesh, they are more or less engaged in tending to a lifeless body. They cannot conceive of performing any activity in this world besides feeding and dressing it. Whatever they do and possess is centered around their body and those related with it, their so-called relatives. This class of people is deeply engrossed in fruitive activities, and they are included among the *smārtas*.

The scriptures refer to these people with the words *sthūle paśyanti varvarāḥ*, meaning uncivilized, low class persons who see the gross aspect of everything. Cārvāka, a *pratyakṣa-darśī* (one who relies on one's direct sense perception of objects), gives utmost importance to gross sense enjoyment.

The second type of demon — one who entertains subtle hankerings — is intent on searching out the undifferentiated *brahma*. Such persons are followers of the Advaita doctrine; in other words, they are Māyāvādīs. They do not directly desire gross sense enjoyment, but are obsessed with indirectly amassing an enjoyment that is in fact thousands of times greater than gross gratification. They want to become *brahma,* the Supreme Entity. They try to fulfill their purpose by declaring that the actual supreme controller of this world, Bhagavān, is powerless. Thus, they want to bring everything under their control for personal enjoyment.]

Question 388—How can we attain auspiciousness?

Answer—Attraction to sense objects and the tendency to commit sins should not be accepted with reverence. In other words, we must reject the hankering for sense objects and the tendency to sin. What to speak of sinful acts, we should also give up pious acts, surrender to Bhagavān, and engage in devotional service to Lord Hari; then, auspiciousness will come to us. Jagāi and Mādhāi avoided sinful activities after taking shelter at the lotus feet of Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*) is the ultimate goal of life. Only those who know this can understand the degraded condition of others.

One gets eternal life by serving Lord Hari; those who serve Him never die. Devotees do not have the material 'enemies' such as lust and anger. Nondevotees hanker for worldly beauty (*rūpa*), taste

(*rasa*), sound (*śabda*), fragrance (*gandha*), and touch (*sparśa*). Once a natural attraction for *hari-bhajana* develops, one need not endeavor to forcibly suppress one's material senses. When one begins devotional service to Lord Hari without duplicity, the poisonous fangs of the material senses are broken by the mercy of Bhagavān. Even an elderly person bound by *māyā* is attached to sense objects. Those engaged in devotional service to Lord Hari do not see the material world to be full of distress. Rather, they see the whole world to be full of bliss (*viśvaṁ pūrṇa-sukhāyate*). What to speak of Lord Indra, who is a devotee of Lord Hari, they do not want to become even four-headed Brahmā (*vidhi-mahendrādiśca-kīṭāyate*). [**Note:** even the exalted post of Lord Brahmā or Lord Indra, fervently sought after by the most elevated of the demigods, is seen as comparable to the position of an insect by devotees who have been blessed with the supreme fortune of receiving the merciful glance of the Supreme Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.] No one in this world wants to become an insect, but one engaged in devotional service to Lord Hari does not mind being an insect. [**Note:** Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura repeats the same sentiment in one of the songs in his *Gītāvalī*—"O Lord, if it is Your wish that I should take birth again, grant me birth in the house of a devotee. I will even gladly become a worm or an insect as long as I can be Your servant, but I have no interest in becoming a Brahmā who has no interest in Your service."] Even demigods can attain auspiciousness by the mercy of devotees of Śrī Caitanyadeva.

It is important to attain *svarūpa-siddhi*; otherwise, if we think of worldly things at the time of death, then we will have to return to the material world. [**Note:***svarūpa-siddhi* is the stage in which a devotee's *svarūpa* (internal spiritual form and identity) becomes manifest, and this comes at the stage of *bhāva-bhakti*.] When we are not in the company of

devotees of Bhagavān, we end up in narrow-minded sects or groups (*sampradāyas*).

Individually, adjustment with the Absolute Person must be sought after.

Question 389—What is *karma-kāṇḍa* (the *dharma* of mundane piety) and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (the cultivation of knowledge)?

Answer—The ideology that: "I alone will enjoy the results or fruits of my past actions (*karmas*)" is known as *karma-kāṇḍa*. The ideology that: "Neither the Supreme Lord (*īśvara*) nor I will enjoy the results of my past deeds (*karmas*)" is known as *jñāna-kāṇḍa*.

Question 390—What is the great good fortune (*bhāgya*)?

Answer—The living entity is wandering in the material universe (*brahmāṇḍa*) since time immemorial. However when his sojourn through the material world is about to end, he develops a little taste for devotional service (*bhakti*). That awakening of the slight taste for rendering devotional service is indeed the great good fortune (*bhāgya*).

Question 391—How do fruitive workers (*karmīs*), philosophical speculators (*jñānīs*), and devotees (*bhaktas*) think?

Answer—The *karmīs* are sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*). The *jñānīs* are either renouncers (*tyāgīs*) or disguised subtle sense gratifiers (*prachanna-bhogīs*). The devotees (*bhaktas*) are servants of Bhagavān.

The ideology of dry mental speculators (*śuṣka-jñānīs*) is: "I will become one with Brahman, and when I go away, I will give the objects of my sense gratification to the world." Impersonalists always try to attack devotees of Bhagavān, devotion to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān Himself. Such impersonalists think that even if they engage in gambling or other trivial, non-spiritual activity while staying in the holy abode of

Kāśī, they will certainly become Śiva upon death.

Evildoers (*ku-karmīs*) have the ideology: "We will enjoy sense gratification by causing others to suffer." Pious persons (*sat-karmīs*) have the ideology: "We will give charity (*dāna*), meditate (*dhyāna*), do virtuous deeds (*puṇya*), and serve saintly persons (*sādhus*) to accumulate pious merit (*puṇya*). We will also accumulate wealth for our descendants and relatives." Bhagavān's devotees think: "We will save money for those doing *hari-bhajana* (devotional service to Lord Hari) or those who will serve Hari, Guru, and Vaiṣṇavas in the future." The ideology of pure devotees is that all money should be spent in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana* or *hari-sevā*).

Question 392—What is the best act of goodness?

Answer—Let your attention be on Kṛṣṇa; such a desire or blessing is auspicious for the whole world. Helping a living entity apply his intelligence and heart in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa is the topmost benevolence.

Donating 'devotion to Lord Kṛṣṇa' to everyone is the topmost charity and greatest altruism.

The heart of devotees always remains busy for the welfare of others. Knowing Bhagavān is the topmost knowledge. The scriptures state: *vidyā bhagavatāvadhi*—devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakti*) is the transcendental knowledge of spiritual life (*parā-vidyā*).

prabhu kahe,—"kon vidyā vidyā-madhye sāra?"
rāya kahe,—"kṛṣṇa-bhakti vinā vidyā nāhi āra"

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya,* 8.244)

Translation—Mahāprabhu inquired, "Among all types of knowledge, which is the best?" Rāya Rāmānanda replied, "Besides *kṛṣṇa-bhakti* there is no other type of knowledge."

The residents of the world are not getting any

auspiciousness or welfare (*kalyāṇa*) by the Godless education that is being preached and transmitted; rather, it is only bringing inauspiciousness and it will continue to do so in the future.

Humankind will attain the topmost auspiciousness and benefit if the mercy of Śrī Caitanyadeva is distributed far and wide.

Question 393—What is *parikara-vaiśiṣṭya*?

Answer—A group of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa-candra who are His eternally perfected associates (*nitya-siddha-pārṣadas*) is known by different names such as *parikara-vaiśiṣṭa* (special associates), *viśiṣṭa-parikara* (special entourage), and *mukhya-parikara* (main associates). Those who totally fulfill the innermost desire of the heart (*mano'bhīṣṭa*) of the Supreme Lord are known as *mukhya-parikara*. Those who live in the material world and who take shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Gaurasundara and make progress in devotional service (*bhajana*) to Lord Kṛṣṇa while doing spiritual practice aimed at perfection (*sādhana*) are secondary associates (*gauṇa-parikara*). After achieving realization of their eternal nature (*svarūpa-siddhi*), they achieve *vastu-siddhi*, or entrance into the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa in *bhauma* Vṛndāvana in a particular material universe. At that time they are considered to be direct associates (*sākṣāt-parikara* or *mukhya-parikara*).

Question 394—Can Bhagavān Śrī Guru and Śrī Govinda chasten (discipline) us?

Answer—Śrī Guru and Śrī Govinda, who are the Absolute Truth beyond sense perception (*adhokṣaja-vastu*), are our eternal Lords. The word *prabhu* (Lord) means one who can both chasten and show affection.

'kartum akartum anyathā kartuṁ yaḥ
samarthaḥ sa eva īśvaraḥ'

Meaning: Śrī Kṛṣṇa can do whatever He likes

and then undo it, and He can change whatever He has done. The Supreme Lord is all-powerful; nothing is beyond His abilities. The omnipotent Lord is not limited to the powers which we ascribe to Him; that is not what is meant by omnipotence.

It is not the case that the Supreme Lord shows only affection and mercy, and does not chasten and chastise; He can also chastise and chasten. Bhagavān incarnates in order to correct those who are averse to Him and those who are hypocrites (*dāmbhika*) by restraining and chastening them. Both showering affection (*anugraha*) and giving chastening or chastisement (*nigraha*) are the mercy of the merciful Lord; *nigraha* is secondary mercy and *anugraha* is primary mercy.

Living entities (*jīvas*) conditioned or bound by the illusory potency *māyā* (*baddha*), who are averse (*vimukha*) to Lord Kṛṣṇa and are arrogant (*dhṛṣṭa*), are suitable for correction and reprimand (*nigraha*) by Bhagavān. Living entities favorable to Lord Kṛṣṇa are qualified to receive affection (*anugraha*). Practicing devotees (*sādhakas*) who are meek and humble (*dīna-hīna*), and have a simple heart (*sarala-citta*), are qualified to receive affection from Bhagavān even if they have some weakness of heart. On the other hand, egoistic people with crooked minds must be restrained because they are hypocrites.

This material world lacks eternity (*nityatva*) and unending bliss (*nitya-ānanda*). There is only inauspiciousness (*amaṅgala*) and lack of bliss (*nirānanda*) here; one moment the sky is clear, the next it is full of clouds, and then there may be rain, a storm, or a tornado. On the other hand, in Vaikuṇṭha there is no need of restraint or correction; only eternal, unlimited bliss is there.

Question 395—How can we escape the cycle of birth and death in the material world (*saṁsāra*)?

Answer—At present we are in trouble. In a conditioned state, we are busy twenty-four hours a day only in endeavors to eliminate scarcity (*abhāva*) and satisfy our senses. When effort is made through the material senses (*jaḍa-indriyas*) to attain personal happiness, the result is only death. Everyone's duty is to take shelter of Śrī Guru-pāda-padma (lotus feet of a spiritual master) in order to escape from this material world characterized by death and engage in devotional service to Lord Hari (*hari-bhajana*). Taking initiation (*dīkṣā*) from a spiritual master after receiving shelter at his lotus feet (*guru-pada-āśraya*) is the gateway to the spiritual kingdom of devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*bhakti-rājya*). We should advance in the kingdom of devotional service by following the guidance of great personalities (*mahājanas*). Bali Mahārāja, grandson of Prahlāda Mahārāja, served the Supreme Personality of Godhead by fully surrendering all of his wealth and possessions. We should follow in his footsteps by taking permanent refuge of Śrī Guru (revered spiritual master) and Śrī Gaurāṅga (Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu), surrendering all of our possessions at their lotus feet. We can be delivered from the bondage of material existence if we surrender to and serve a spiritual master and the holy name with respect and love. Śrī Mahāprabhu said:

tāte kṛṣṇa bhaje, kare gurura sevana
māyā-jāla chuṭe, pāya kṛṣṇera caraṇa

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 22.25)

prabhu kahe, — "vaiṣṇava-sevā, nāma-saṅkīrtana
dui karô, śīghra pābe śrī-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa"

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 16.70)

sādhu-śāstra-kṛpāya yadi kṛṣṇonmukha haya
sei jīva nistare, māyā tāhāre chāḍaya

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (*Madhya-līlā* 20.120)

Meaning—One gets rid of the entanglement of the network of illusion (*māyā-jāla*) and attains the lotus feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-caraṇa*) by worshiping

Him while rendering devotional service to a spiritual master. The Lord said, “Serve devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) and engage in *nāma-saṅkīrtana* (loud congregational chanting of the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa). If you do so, you will quickly attain the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. By the grace (*kṛpā*) of saintly persons (*sādhus*) and the holy scriptures (*śāstras*) a soul becomes inclined to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa, and then he is delivered from material existence. At that time *māyā*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa, releases him.”

Question 396—What should we strive for?

Answer—We say that one should listen to *hari-kathā*, narrations of the holy names, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates, all of the time. We should correct our heart or consciousness (*citta*), which is inclined toward sense objects (*viṣayas*), and make it inclined toward loving devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-unmukha*), by staying in the company of *sādhus* (saintly persons). Only then will we attain auspiciousness.

Whatever is in our destiny (*bhāgya*) will happen automatically; there is no need to make a separate effort for this. If we make any separate effort, it should be only applied to *hari-bhajana*, devotional service to Lord Hari.

One who encourages us to derive pleasure from sense objects is actually our enemy. Since we are attached to sense objects (*viṣayas*), we regard persons advising us to engage in sense gratification to be our friends. *Sādhus* and spiritual masters (*gurus*) are our real selfless brothers, friends, relatives, and well-wishers (*bandhus*). They prohibit us from enjoying the happiness of sense gratification (*viṣaya-sukha*). Furthermore, they prohibit us from even thinking about or being involved in materialistic life. Unfortunately, we do not heed their words, and

we consider our real friends to be enemies or rivals (*śatru*). Such is our misfortune!

Question 397—Why do you not perform *līlā-kīrtana* (congregational singing of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's holy pastimes, usually accompanied by music) in the *maṭha* (monastery)?

Answer—We have no objection to hearing and chanting the pastimes (*līlās*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa; we should only engage in such hearing and singing (*kīrtana*). Only then will our interest (*ruci*) and eagerness (*āgraha*) for hearing and discussing worldly topics (*grāmya-kathā*), such as heroic deeds (*karma-vīratva*) of conditioned living entities, go away. There is no way other than this.

There is a speciality (*vaiśiṣṭya*) in glorifying the pastimes (*līlā-kīrtana*) and the conjugal mellow (*śṛṅgāra-rasa*). Hapless living entities (*jīvas*) who are full of unwanted habits (*anarthas*) can hear and sing about the pastimes of Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu (*gaura-līlā*) and the childhood pastimes (*bālya-līlās*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. If instead of doing so we hear about and discuss the esoteric, confidential pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa, we will not attain auspiciousness and well-being; rather, this will only bring inauspiciousness and adversity upon us.

One should only hear *kīrtana* (glorification of the name, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Bhagavān) from the mouth of Śrī Gurudeva. A real devotee thinks as follows: "I will hear and sing only *hari-kathā* (narrations of the holy names, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates) emanating from the lotus mouth of a holy spiritual master (Śrī Guru). I will hear and glorify the *kathā* (narrations) of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that emanated from the lotus mouth of Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī, who is the parrot (*śuka*) of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. I will approach and sit next to a spiritual master (*guru*) or devotee who is dedicated to his spiritual master

(*guru-niṣṭha bhakta*) when he performs *kīrtana* ordained and performed by Śrī Gaura Himself. I will listen to the *kīrtana* emanating from his pure lotus mouth and repeat it. I will submissively listen to the glorification of the holy name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlās*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa emanating from his pure mouth. Thus, I will perform *kīrtana* under his guidance. I will only sing and hear what he sings; I will not listen to anyone else."

We will have to perform *kīrtana* in the company of an advanced devotee and hear *hari-kathā* only from those who are superior to us. We will not attain auspiciousness if we hear from those who are not more advanced than us.

Both hearing and chanting the confidential pastimes of Śrī Rādhā Govinda constitute our main worship (*upāsanā*) and daily devotional service (*nitya-bhajana*). However, singing songs describing the intimate pastimes of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govindajī (*bhajana-līlā*) in front of the general public is inappropriate and offensive (*aparādha*). *Āpana bhajana kathā nā kahibe yathā tathā*—do not discuss topics of your devotional service (*bhajana*) in public. Everyone aspiring for auspiciousness must follow this instruction of the *ācāryas* (spiritual masters who teach by example and set proper religious standards). If the people present in a group have different ones of the five different internal moods or mellows of devotional service, it is appropriate to chant the holy name (*nāma*), offer prayers (*prārthanā*), and sing *kīrtanas* (devotional songs) highlighting the mood of servitorship (*dāsya-rasa*). In a group in which there are only qualified *rasika-bhaktas* (devotees able to relish *bhakti-rasa*, mellows of devotion, within their heart), one should engage in *rasa-kīrtana*, or singing songs that describe and glorify the sweet conjugal mellow of love and affection of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Govinda. While listening to *rasa-kīrtana*, everyone should experience the mood of devotional service

(*bhajana-bhāva*) that is suitable for his particular constitutional nature or identity (*svarūpa*); otherwise, there will be harm (*ahita*) instead of benefit (*hita*). If in order to follow this standard the custom of singing devotional songs describing the intimate mellows of Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa (*līlā-kīrtana-paddhati*) is set aside, then let it be so. This will only reform people. Allowing singing of songs describing intimate, confidential affairs between Śrī Śrī Rādhā Kṛṣṇa (*rasa-gāna*) everywhere, with a desire to acquire wealth and sense pleasure, is certainly the work of Kali, the personality of this Iron Age of quarrel and hypocrisy.

Question 398—How is the spiritual world (*para-jagata*) different from the material world (*jaḍa-jagata*)?

Answer—This material world is inferior (*heya*); it is an incomplete and imperfect reflection of the eternal spiritual world. The variety in this material world is temporary (*anitya*), deficient (*khaṇḍa*), and inferior because it is merely a dim reflection of the variety in the eternal world (*nitya-jagata*). The spiritual world is the permanent, real abode (*vāstava-adhiṣṭhāna*) of transcendental personalities (*aprākṛta-pātra*) characterized by transcendental location (*aprākṛta-sthāna*) and transcendental time (*aprākṛta* or *akhaṇḍa-kāla*). The Supreme Personality of Godhead Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is the object of love of devotees (*viṣaya-vastu*), is uniquely present in the spiritual world. Although there is a multiplicity of souls who are receptacles of love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*āśraya-vastu*), there is no lack of harmony (*aikytāna*). It is wrong to think that there is a plurality of Supreme Enjoyers or recipients of love (*viṣaya*), but there is nothing wrong in accepting variety in the energies (*śaktis*) of the one Supreme Enjoyer, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Question 399—Are the results of activities performed in the course of material existence (*karma-phala*) also the mercy of Bhagavān?

Answer—The wise regard *karma-phala* as the mercy of Bhagavān. They carry on their lives while experiencing those results. At the same time, they dedicate themselves to Bhagavān by rendering sincere devotional service through body, mind, and words. No matter what calamity may come, they accept it as the result of their past misdeeds. They do not blame Bhagavān for any seemingly unfavorable outcome. Rather, they consider calamities to be the mercy (*kṛpā*) of Bhagavān, and they 'place all suffering on their head' (humbly accept suffering) as a blessing in disguise. In this way, their love for Bhagavān goes on increasing; this is the teaching of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Question 400—How will we realize transcendental subject matter (*aprākṛta-tattva*)?

Answer—Transcendental subject matter never surrenders before materialistic or mundane knowledge, intelligence, and conceptions; in other words, transcendental subject matter cannot be revealed through such knowledge, intelligence, and conceptions. We will have to surrender to those who have surrendered to transcendental subject matter, and who have deeply entered into transcendental philosophical truth; only then can we understand the actual nature of that truth. Vedic scriptures state:

tad-vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet
samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (1.2.12)

In order to obtain direct realization of the Supreme Absolute Reality, or in other words knowledge concerning *prema-bhakti*, a person who is desirous of his own welfare should approach a *sad-guru* who knows the purport of the *Vedas* (*veda-tātparya*) and who is *kṛṣṇa-tattva-vid,* learned in the

truths regarding Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Taking an offering of *yajñīya-samidha* (sacrificial wood or wood fuel to be offered in a fire sacrifice) in one's hands, one should approach such a *sad-guru* with the mood of total dedication of one's body, mind, and words.

It is said in the *Gītā*:

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ

Meaning: Understand this transcendental knowledge by offering your prostrated obeisances to the spiritual master, who imparts such knowledge, by asking him relevant questions, and by rendering service to him. Those who have direct perception of the Supreme Absolute Truth and who are well-versed in the imports of the scriptures can enlighten you by instructing you in this science.

Aprākṛta-tattva, adhokṣaja-vastu, or *vāstava-satya* is *sarvajña* (omniscient). All intelligent persons naturally remain inclined to serve the omniscient, independent Entity or Substance (*sarvajña-svarāṭa-vastu*). Those who are averse to such service fall down in this material word, which is like a jail, and experience distress.

In order to deliver such fallen persons and bring about a change in their distorted or corrupted ideas, the merciful Absolute Truth (*karuṇāmaya-vāstava-satya*) sends His representatives, who are fully liberated souls.

Question 401—Whom should we follow?

Answer—No one who presents an obstacle to the satisfaction of Lord Kṛṣṇa's senses is qualified to enter His spiritual kingdom; that is why we should never follow such people. We will not allow anyone to dominate us. Only Lord Viṣṇu and His servants have complete dominion over us. If in the name of generosity we allow someone other than Lord Viṣṇu or Vaiṣṇavas to rule us, or we equate someone else with a spiritual master or Lord Kṛṣṇa, we should

understand that *māyā*, the illusory potency, has certainly established dominion over us. We will reject so-called liberation (*mukti*) with a kick. *Sāyujya-mukti*, the liberation of becoming one with the Lord by merging into either His body or His Brahman effulgence, is the culmination of offense (*aparādha*). *Māyāvādīs* (Impersonalists) are offenders; therefore, they can never utter the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-nāma*). When they pretend to utter His holy name, their utterance pierces His limbs. We will not accept bad logic (*kurtarka*) as our destination. We will not conclude our words by reasoning alone. We can never realize the truth, that is beyond the scope of logic, through logic. Therefore, to appreciate narrations of the pastimes of Śrī Hari, it is essential to leave logic (*tarka*) and follow in the footsteps of His devotees. Under all circumstances we should remain engaged in serving Śrī Hari with all of our senses. We should not be or follow skeptics (*ādhyakṣika-jana*).

Question 402—What kind of people are *ādhyakṣika*?

Answer—There are two paths: *śrauta-patha* and *tarka-patha*. *Śrauta-patha* is the descending process (*avaroha-panthā*) and *tarka-pantha* is the ascending process (*āroha-panthā*). Serving the Supreme Lord, who is beyond the grasp of mundane sense perception (*adhokṣaja-sevā*), means to dedicate one's ears to *śrauta-patha*, the path of receiving divine knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) through a *paramparā* of self-realized *gurus* by hearing (*śruti*). Engaging one's senses in *tarka-patha*, or persuasive reasoning, is known as *ādhyakṣikatā*. *Ādhyakṣika* people have taken shelter of their material senses (*akṣa*). They are bewildered by worldly knowledge (*jāgatika-jñana*), the imperfect knowledge acquired through the mundane senses (*indriyaja-jñāna*), yet they are quick to tout their own glories. They create a snare of logic and argument (*yukti-jāla*) to support

their position of being dedicated to satisfying their senses. The ascending system of acquiring knowledge through one's mundane senses (*āroha-praṇālī*) is *ādhyakṣikatā*. When the rays of the Sun fall on our eyes we can see the Sun with the help of those rays. This is seeing the Sun according to the descending system (*avaroha-praṇālī*). We cannot see the Sun if we do not take assistance of its rays and instead attempt to independently see it by artificial light; this system is known as *ādhyakṣikatā* or *ārohavāda*. *Ādhyakṣikatā* is the system advocated by Rāvaṇa. In *ādhyakṣikatā*, there is gratification of the senses and praise of non-devotees who are averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Ādhyakṣika* people are sophists (*hetuvādī*) or covered logicians (*pracchanna-tārkika*). We can understand the philosophical truth about Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-tattva*) and topics about pure devotional service (*śuddha-bhakti*) only after renouncing *ādhyakṣikatā* and sincerely surrendering at the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa without duplicity.

Question 403—Should we do meditation artificially?

Answer—Never.

kīrtana prabhāve smaraṇa haibe
sei kāle nirjana bhajana sambhava

Meaning: remembrance (*smaraṇa*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa comes naturally as a result of performing *kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Kṛṣṇa's name, form, qualities, and pastimes), and at that time *bhajana* (devotional service) in seclusion becomes possible. It is not possible to engage in meditation (*dhyāna*) with an agitated heart or mind (*vikṣipta-citta*). The path of artificial meditation is a kind of disguised attempt to satisfy one's senses. Meditation can be natural and non-artificial through *kīrtana* of a transcendental (*aprākṛta*) subject. There are five types of relationships that a minute sentient living entity (*aṇu-cetana-jīva*) can have with the absolute or complete

sentient being (*pūrṇa-cetana* Bhagavān). When we worship *śabda-brahma* (transcendental sound or the holy name of Lord Kṛṣṇa) as the means (*abhidheya*) to achieve our ultimate goal of realizing these relationships, natural love (*rāga*) and attraction (*ākarṣaṇa*) manifest in our heart. It is effortless to meditate on the Supreme Sentient Being (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) through that love and attraction; there is no distraction (*vikṣepa*), covering (*āvaraṇa*), or artificiality (*kṛtrimatā*) in that meditation. Meditation performed by those in the disciplic succession (*sampradāya*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa's unalloyed servants is totally natural.

Question 404—Is *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* a book about the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (*līlā-grantha*)?

Answer—*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta* is not just a scripture describing the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu; it is a wonderful book with exalted philosophical conceptions. In this book, along with the pastimes of Mahāprabhu there is discussion of philosophy. After the pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-līlā*) come the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (*śrī caitanya-līlā*), and after the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu come the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kavirāja Gosvāmī Prabhu, following the path of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, wrote this book.

Question 405—Who are the rationalists (*tarka-panthīs*)?

Answer—Rationalists attack the Absolute Truth by taking a challenging mood. The path of reasoning (*tarka-panthā*) is the antithesis of the idea of surrender and submissive aural reception from a bona fide spiritual master as taught by *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā.*

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā

Meaning: Acquire this *jñāna* by offering prostrated obeisances to a *guru* who imparts

transcendental knowledge, asking him relevant questions, and serving him.

One path follows the principle of hearing from a spiritual master (Gurudeva) who is engaged in genuine glorification (*satya-kīrtana*) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the Absolute Truth, and attempting to be inclined to render loving devotional service to Bhagavān under his guidance. The other path advocates trying to attain truth that is beyond the scope of the mundane senses (*atīndriya-vāstava-satya*) on the strength of knowledge acquired by the mundane senses (*indriyaja-jñāna*). The first path—hearing authentic Vedic knowledge from authorities and wholeheartedly accepting it—is *śrauta-panthā*, and the second path—engaging in mental speculation and dry logic—is *tarka-panthā*. *Śrauta-patha* accepts direct means of deliberation (*anvaya-bhāva*) while *tarka-patha* accepts indirect means of deliberation (*vyatireka-bhāva*). The five philosophies of *sāṅkhya, yoga, nyāya, vaiśeṣika*, and *pūrva-mīmāṁsā* are based on logic or *tarka-patha*; only Vedānta philosophy accepts *śrauta-patha*. Śaṅkarācārya advocated *tarka-patha* in Vedānta philosophy rather than *śrauta-patha* for the purpose of bewildering those who are averse to Lord Kṛṣṇa. One who pursues *ādhyakṣika-jñāna* is on the path of logic.

The pastimes that devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (Vaiṣṇavas) discuss are not imaginary tales (*kalpita-kathās*) fabricated by them. Vaiṣṇavas are completely dedicated to the lotus feet of their spiritual master (*guru-pāda-padma*); in other words, they only speak about pastimes that they have heard from his lotus mouth (*guru-mukha*). Actually, spiritual masters are one, not five or ten (not many).

man-nāthaḥ śrī-jagannāthaḥ,
mad-guru śrī-jagad-guru

Meaning: My worshipful Lord is Śrī Jagannātha (Kṛṣṇa) and My spiritual master is the spiritual preceptor of the whole world.

Absolute Truth requires no challenge from anybody.

Question 406—Did many personalities act as a spiritual master during the time of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu?

Answer—Yes. All of them were Bhagavān's eternal associates (*pārṣadas*) and were very dear to Him (*kṛṣṇa-preṣṭha*). They were non-different from one another. All of them spoke only about service to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sevā*).

Question 407—Can one be a spiritual master for all religions?

Answer—Leave aside discussion about all religions (*dharma-ṭarm*a). Just as Śrī Guru-pāda-padma, the revered spiritual master whose feet are soft and reddish like a lotus flower, is one, so *dharma* is only one. That one *dharma* is *ātma-dharma*, the natural devotional inclination of the soul. Everything other than *ātma-dharma* is *deha-dharma* (function of the body) or *mano-dharma* (function of the mind). In this material world, we hear that there are various opinions (*mata*) and paths (*patha*) in the case of *deha-dharma* and *mano-dharma*. However, this does not apply with respect to *ātma-dharma*. While *ātma-dharma* is one (*advitiya*), it does not lack wonderful variety (*vicitratrā*). It is not *dharma* without variety; it is the natural (*svābhāvika*), spontaneous (*svacchanda*) function (*vṛtti*) of the pure, resplendent soul that is completely devoid of worldly covering (*āvaraṇa*) and limits (*sīmās*).

Question 408—How can we know the real truth (*vāstava-satya*)?

Answer—The faith (*śraddhā*), devotion (*bhakti*), and taste (*ruci*) of one who has no devotional propensity for the Lord are directed towards external things; one can never know the truth through this kind

of faith, devotion, and taste. When real substance (*vāstava-vastu*) personally and mercifully manifests of its own accord, it introduces itself. If one is devoid of duplicity (*kapaṭatā*) and is inclined to render service, then *caitya-guru*, the Supersoul in the heart, will mercifully inform one as to what to do to attain the real substance. *Vāstava-satya-vastu* (eternal real substance) flows only through pure *āmnāya-dhārā*, the transcendental current of conclusive evidence.

Question 409—Why do some say that Bhagavān is impersonal and devoid of form and qualities (*nirviśeṣa*)?

Answer—Bhagavān, the Absolute Truth and transcendental substance (*vāstava-satya-vastu*), His atomic parts (*jīvas*), and His potency (*māyā*) are not impersonal. Parameśvara (Supreme Lord) performs spiritual pastimes. He has transcendental form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlā*). He can take initiative; He has freedom. He is the complete manifestation of Supreme Ruler, Governor, and Operator. He is the Master of the power of knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*), of the desire potency embodied by Yoga-māyā (*icchā-śakti*), and of the power to act (*kriyā-śakti*). The limited powers of knowing, feeling, and willing that are present in us are present in Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the greatest extent. The illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-māyā*) attacks us only because we have forgotten who the Fountainhead is, and causes us to have mistaken thoughts. That illusory potency misleads us into mistaking a false sense of discrimination (*asat-viveka*) to be real or spiritual discrimination (*viveka*).

Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests in *viśuddha-sattva*, the state of unalloyed goodness which is beyond the influence of material nature. Only the heart of one to whom Lord Kṛṣṇa shows mercy will be effulgent (*ujjvala*) with *viśuddha-sattva*. The *darśana* (vision) that occurs in a heart that is radiant with *viśuddha-*

sattva is realization of knowledge, bliss, and eternity.

Question 410 – Who can preach?

Answer—Only great personalities who have attained realization (*anubhūti*) and who have seen Bhagavān can become preachers (*pracārakas*). Innumerable preachers can preach by following in the footsteps of such realized preachers who have seen Bhagavān. When Śrī Vyāsadeva had *darśana* (vision) of the complete Supreme Personality of Godhead Śrī Kṛṣṇa along with Śrīmatī Rādhikā (*pūrṇa-puruṣa*), he became peaceful and preached *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Śrīla Śukadeva Gosvāmī, the Nava-yogendras (nine *mahā-bhāgavata* sons of Śrī Ṛṣabhadeva), and others who took delight (*ārāma*) in the soul (ātmā) and who were always satisfied (*ātmārāma*) preached about *ātma-dharma*, the natural devotional inclination of the soul, as *pari-vrājakas* (wandering mendicant preachers in the renounced order of life). Only supremely liberated persons (*parama-mukta puruṣa-gaṇa*) travel and propagate *hari-kathā*, narrations of the holy names, form, qualities, and pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His associates. Śrī Mahāprabhu and His eternal associates (pārṣadas) propagated *hari-kathā* everywhere. [**Note:** Śrī Ṛṣabhadeva, an *avatāra* of Bhagavān, had one-hundred sons. Eighty-one were *brāḥmaṇas* accomplished in knowledge of *Veda*, nine (*nava-yogendras*) were *mahā-bhāgavatas*, and the remainder were *kṣatriyas*.]

Thousands of questions may arise in the mind, and all of them will be answered if one properly hears *hari-kathā* even once. One will achieve nothing if one becomes impatient and anxious (*adhīra*).

Question 411—How can we prepare to serve Bhagavān?

Answer—By serving *Śrī Guru-pāda-padma* one gets mercy, and only by receiving his grace can

one become prepared to attain Bhagavān. One gets strength of heart only by serving a spiritual master and serving transcendental sound (*śabda-brahma*).

Question 412—How can we find a spiritual master (*sad-guru*)?

Answer—The Lord is present inside as *caitya-guru* in the heart, and present outside as an exalted spiritual master (*mahānta-guru*). Only if we are sincere and free from duplicity will Bhagavān arrange for us to meet with a *mahānta-guru*. Thousands of people like us may be holding an application form, but only Śrī Kṛṣṇa can approve it. Why is He not approving our application? We cannot ask such a question; He is not like our gardener. We have to be tolerant (*sahiṣṇu*) and expect His mercy; we have to be ready to serve Him by giving up all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Him. If we sincerely want to get Lord Kṛṣṇa's mercy and we have no duplicity in our heart, He will certainly shower mercy upon us. We will find a bona fide spiritual master by His mercy.

kṛṣṇa yadi kṛpā kare kona bhāgyavāne
guru-antaryāmi-rūpe śikhāya āpane

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 22.47)

Meaning: When Lord Kṛṣṇa shows mercy to a fortunate person, He personally gives him instructions as *caitya-guru* in the heart about how to perform *bhajana* to Him.

Question 413—Should we continuously perform *hari-kīrtana* (loud glorification of Lord Hari)?

Answer—Loud glorification (*kīrtana*) of the pastimes of Lord Hari (*hari-kathā*) is the real peace or rest (*viśrāma*); by doing this, all kinds of weariness (*śrama*) and troubles are eliminated. Giving up *kīrtana* to engage in any other activity for even a *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes) is averseness to Bhagavān

(*bhagavad-vimukhatā*). *Mahā-bhāgavatas* (great devotees) and devotees who follow them glorify *hari-kathā* nicely and continuously; they have no other duty. Śrī Caitanya-deva commanded: *kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hariḥ,* meaning that one should continuously chant the holy name of Śrī Hari.

Performing *kīrtana* of Bhagavān by body (*tana*), mind (*mana*), and words (*vacana*) under all circumstances is a sign of being liberated (*mukti-lakṣaṇa*) even while living in this world. [**Note:** one *daṇḍa* comprises twenty-four minutes, and two *daṇḍas* make one *muhūrta*.]

Question 414—We consider giving charity (*paropakāra*) to be a religious duty (*dharma*); what is your opinion about this?

Answer—Charity is a good thing, but there are two major flaws in this consideration. The first point is that this idea invites or encourages godless or atheistic sentiments (*nirīśvaratā*) to become perceptible (*vyakta-rūpa*). The second point is that this idea may lead to violence (*hiṁsā*) against animals (*paśu-jāti*) or other living entities.

Whatever is done while neglecting the Absolute Integer (Supreme Spiritual Substance or *carama-pūrṇa-vastu*) is of no value. We are not in favor of utilizing spiritual knowledge about the ultimate goal of human life, *kṛṣṇa-prema* (*paramārtha*), for the sake of convenience (*suvidhāvāda*). It is disrespectful to saintliness (*sādhutva*) to try to get a sage (*sādhu*) to do worldly service. The duty of a human is not just ordinary altruism or charity. There is another great task for humans—service to Bhagavān. Only by serving Him will our sorrows be eliminated forever and will we be happy forever. That is why it is our wish to make everyone in the world a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-bhakta*).

Devotional service to Bhagavān is indeed the

dharma of a sentient being; it is the *dharma* of the soul (*ātmā*). It is eternal religion (*nitya-dharma*) and the topmost religion (*para-dharma*). Bhagavān Caitanyadeva propagated narrations of *parama-dharma*, the topmost religious principles, in this world. Only by that does this world get complete benefit (*upakāra*) and welfare (*kalyāṇa*). Śrī Caitanyadeva said:

bhārata-bhūmite haila manuṣya-janma yāra
janma sārthaka kari' kara para-upakāra

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā* 9.41)

Meaning: One who has taken birth as a human being in the land of Bhārata (India) should make his life successful by engaging in devotional service (*bhajana*) and working for the benefit of others.

Śrī Caitanya-deva spoke only about what actually benefits a country and living entities. Unlike those who supposedly seek social welfare, His country (*deśa*) and people (*jīvas*) are not petty (*kṣudra*), narrow-minded (*saṅkīrṇa*), unstable (*asthāyī*), unpredictable or changeable (*parivartana-śīla*), or fake (*kālpanika*) like a 'flower in the sky' (*ākāśa-kusuma*). The benefits that He discussed are superior (*para*); in other words, they are not inferior (*nikṛṣṭa*) or impermanent (*anitya*). Using their petty intelligence and meager power to think, people took in the past, are taking now, and will take in the future innumerable measures to bring about worldly progress or advancement in their country for the sake of philanthropy or charity. However, such measures have not brought, are not bringing, and will not bring any real benefit or welfare to a country and its residents; they are efforts to achieve mere temporary benefits. Mahāprabhu told us about the system (*upakāra*) for attaining real benefit.

vedyaṁ vāstavam atra vastu śivadaṁ
tāpa-trayonmūlanam

Meaning: Completely rejecting all religious

activities which are materially motivated, this *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* propounds the highest truth, which is understandable by those devotees who are fully pure in heart. The highest truth is reality distinguished from illusion for the welfare of all. Such truth uproots the threefold miseries.

The method (*praṇālī*) of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the method revealed (*āviṣkṛta*) and adorned (*pariṣkṛta*) by Caitanya-deva; that method brings auspiciousness and destroys the threefold miseries (*ādhyātmika*—physical or mental pain; *ādhibhautika* —pain caused by other living entities; and *ādhidaivika* —pain due to natural disturbances like earthquakes and hurricanes). Systems to provide welfare (*paropakāra-praṇālis*) that are created by various sages and ascetics (*ṛṣis* and *munis*) can give happiness and good results (*preyaḥ*) that last only for a moment. Those systems do not bring auspiciousness to the soul (*ātma-kalyāṇa*) or bestow good fortune (*śreyaḥ*); in other words, they cannot eliminate the threefold miseries. One should know what the root cause of misery (*tāpa*) is, because without eliminating the cause (*kāraṇa*), it is not possible to eliminate the result (*kārya*). If one does not take out the roots of a banyan tree, it grows again even after its branches are cut thousands of times. Thousands of welfare systems conceived by man are like trying to drain the ocean by scooping water out with the hands. Even if thousands of people make such an effort for ages, the ocean will never dry up, even though they may be able to move a large quantity of water elsewhere. Similarly, the ocean of the threefold miseries (*tri-tāpa-rūpa samudra*) of this world will never dry up by welfare means conceived by man, which only lead to false expectations (*mithyā-pralobhana*) for both us and others.

The threefold miseries cannot be eliminated without following the devotional system (*praṇālī*) described in *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. There are infinite

varieties of these miseries, and we can never eliminate even one by the root using artificial measures (*kalpita-upāyas*). Ignorance (*avidyā*) in the form of forgetfulness of Bhagavān (*bhagavad-vismṛti*) has two functions: (1) *āvaraṇātmikā*—covering real knowledge so that a conditioned soul feels satisfied even in inferior conditions; and (2) *vikṣepātmikā* —'throwing' a living entity into the ocean of material existence. This ignorance is the root cause of our entire material suffering. Unless that root cause is eliminated, the effects of the various miseries will remain. A nation's misery (*duḥkha*) will never go away without preaching about serving Bhagavān. Everyone in every nation will achieve eternal welfare when topics related to devotional service (*sevā*) to Bhagavān are preached.

Question 415—How does serving Lord Viṣṇu serve and benefit the world?

Answer—Lord Viṣṇu is the all-pervading, omnipresent Supreme Lord (*vyāpaka-vastu*). He is Parabrahman and is greater than the greatest. When we serve Him, all living entities that are inside Him are also served. A servant of a particular horse cannot be a servant of all horses or a servant of any other animal. A servant of a particular country cannot be a servant of all countries. One who serves at a particular time cannot serve at all times. If one kills a goat or fish to serve one's tongue, that is one-sided service; that act does not serve the goat or fish. If one serves a particular person or country in this material world, other persons or countries may suffer. However, if one serves Lord Viṣṇu, everything is served and everyone becomes happy. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy causes good fortune to appear in one's life, and that mercy is universal (*sārva-janīna*). It brings auspiciousness to all individuals (*pātras*) in all nations in the past, present, and future.

Question 416—In the 'Hare Rāma' portion of the *mahā-mantra*, who is Rāma?

Answer—Devotees inclined to render devotional service to the Supreme Lord in a mood of awe and reverence, who are aware of His unlimited opulence, will perceive Rāma in 'Hare Rāma' as the son of Daśaratha Mahārāja. However, devotees attracted to the human-like sweetness (*mādhurya*) of Vrajendra-nandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa will perceive this Rāma as Rādhā-ramaṇa, the Lord who sports with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in the groves of Vṛndāvana. He is Nanda-nandana, the son of Nanda Mahārāja. When such devotees utter the holy name Rāma, they render devotional service to Rādhā-ramaṇa. Moreover, when they utter the holy name Harā in the vocative case which is 'Hare,' they are addressing Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who is the personification and source of *parā-śakti*, Śrī Bhagavān's transcendental superior potency comprising *cit, taṭasthā,* and *māyā*.

Harā is one name of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. ***Kṛṣṇa-mano harati iti harā arthāt rādhā***—Rādhā is the one who steals the heart of Kṛṣṇa. The word Harā becomes Hare in the vocative case. The word Hari also becomes Hare in the vocative case. There are three Rāmas: Sītā-ramaṇa, Lord Rāghava Rāma who sports with Sītā-devī; Revatī-ramaṇa or Balarāma who sports with Revatī; and Rādhā-ramaṇa Rāma or Rādhānātha Kṛṣṇa, Lord Kṛṣṇa who sports with Śrīmatī Rādhā.

Question 417—How can we find the truth?

Answer—Bhagavān, who is the embodiment of all eternal transcendental form, qualities, and attributes is actual reality or truth (*vāstava-satya*). He alone is the cause of all causes. Real truth is self-effulgent and self-manifest (*sva-prakāśa*). It is not inanimate (*acetana*); rather, He is the supreme doer or active agent. He alone reveals Himself. *Vāstava-satya* cannot be found through cognition (*abhijñatā-*

praṇālī) or via the ascending process of acquiring knowledge (*āroha-panthā*). *Vāstava-satya* is not confined within the third dimension. We can only measure objects that are within the three dimensions of length, breadth, and height; we consider such objects as meant to be enjoyed and controlled by us. An object that can be measured is indeed an illusion (*māyā*). In order to see the Sun, any covering on our eyes must be removed. Similarly, to conceive the actual truth, we must wait until our inherent power to go beyond cognizance of the senses awakens. The Sun cannot be seen at night even with the aid of thousands of powerful electric lamps, but when it naturally rises it can be seen without the aid of electric light. Similarly, *vāstava-satya-vastu* or reality cannot be known by any kind of knowledge acquired through the senses. The nature of reality cannot be known in the covered state of consciousness. One should hear about real substance (*satya-vastu*) from the lotus mouth of a spiritual master; there is no other way.

Question 418—How can we surrender prior to understanding what the truth is?

Answer—If we do not surrender first, we cannot realize the Absolute Truth. As long as we do not surrender, we will continue to follow the path of destruction with a skeptical heart, and we will remain totally bewildered regarding what religious principles to follow.

That is why Arjuna said to Lord Kṛṣṇa:

śiṣyas te 'haṁ śādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam.

Meaning: O Lord Kṛṣṇa! I implore You to tell me what is actually auspicious for me. I am Your disciple and I am surrendered to You. Please instruct me.

We should not take refuge at the feet of ordinary mortals (*martya-vyakti*) who are not transcendental spiritual masters (*pāramārthika-*

gurus). A spiritual master is not a mortal living entity (*martya-jīva*) whom we can measure and enjoy like a sense object. If we take refuge of an ordinary mortal, we can never approach the actual truth (*vāstava-satya*). Śrī Gurudeva is the potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-śakti*); he has realized knowledge of *kṛṣṇa-tattva*. He is non-different (*abhinna*) from Lord Kṛṣṇa; he is His second (*dvitīya*) manifestation (*svarūpa*) or expansion (*prakāśa*).

Question 419—How can we understand that a particular personality is a bona fide spiritual master (*sad-guru*)?

Answer—A person you accept as a spiritual master based on your intellectual reasoning can never truly be a spiritual master. [One should not accept someone as a spiritual master according to worldly intelligence; this can only artificially superimpose the title of spiritual master on someone who is actually not a spiritual master.] Such a false spiritual master will be seen as someone to be controlled by you, and as someone who should conform to the knowledge acquired by you through sense perception (*indriya-jñāna*). A spiritual master sent to you by Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests himself before you externally as a *mahānta-guru* or topmost devotee.

Question 420—What is the specialty of *Gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*?

Answer—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* propagates the Absolute Truth. This scripture is very dear to saintly personalities who feel no envy towards other living beings or Bhagavān. *Gītā* is the course (curriculum) for children in the infant class. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* is the curriculum of a higher class; in other words, it is the post-graduate curriculum. There are many ignorant persons in this world who do not have any knowledge about spirituality. The scripture *Śrīmad*

Bhagavad-gītā is meant to make such ignorant persons qualified for the entrance examination. Those who have acquired the equivalent of an M.A. (Master of Arts) degree or a Ph. D. (Doctor of Philosophy) degree in transcendental knowledge (*parā-vidyā*) are completely qualified (*adhikārī*) to study *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*.

Unbiased saintly persons do not see any difference between *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* and *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. All of the greatest adjectives in the world and suffixes (*ta-ma-p pratyayas*) that we use in Sanskrit grammar take on beauty and effulgence when applied to the lotus feet of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* includes only *ātma-dharma*; it is a direct incarnation (*avatāra*) of Bhagavān. No other scripture in the world is equal or superior to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, and no other scripture can even slightly displace *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from its topmost, incomparable position. *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* is recommended for freshmen seeking admission to the spiritual kingdom; it is the textbook for the kindergarten class of spiritual school. Only those who have finished studying *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* can continue with higher education in spiritual school; they can hear discourses from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* in the company of great devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*mahā-bhāgavatas*). They will derive great benefit by studying and contemplating the teachings of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.*

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is a direct incarnation of Bhagavān. It is beyond material sense perception (*adhokṣaja-vastu*); we cannot measure it with our senses. The more confidential and rare spiritual truths are, the more they are hidden and secure. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* does not reveal itself to people who are averse to its message.

Question 421—What does *caitya-guru* do?

Answer—Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality

of Godhead, resides in the heart of every living entity in the form of *caitya-guru* or indwelling Supersoul, and thus He monitors the pious and impious activities (*sat* and *asat vṛttis*) of living entities (*jīvas*). *Caitya-guru* is the effective or essential performer of action (*prayojaka-karttā*), and He directs one to the *mahānta-guru*, a living saintly person (*sādhu*) who serves as the spiritual master. In addition, the servitors of the *mahānta-guru* act as a *vartma-pradarśaka guru*, a teacher who initially points one to the spiritual path.

The authors of the scriptures, those who comment on the scriptures, and those who act as sanctioned by the scriptures provide appropriate direction for the advancement of restless hearts of people who have unwanted habits (*anarthas*), who are full of ignorance, and who have a childish (*bāliśa*) nature. Such instructing spiritual masters help one before one finds an initiating spiritual master (*dīkṣā-guru*) who provides transcendental knowledge; this is why they are known as a *vartma-pradaśaka-guru* or *patha-pradarśaka-guru*. Without the grace of *caitya-guru* or *caitanya-guru*, one cannot become qualified to serve the lotus feet of a *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *dīkṣā-guru*, or *śikṣā-guru-varga* (instructing spiritual masters). A living entity cannot get the pure mercy (*niṣkapaṭa-kṛpā*) of *caitya-guru* until he has accrued the mercy of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prasādaja sukṛti*). Living entities cannot aspire for devotional service (*bhakti*) if they have a strong desire to attain *dharma* (mundane religiosity), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sense gratification), or *mokṣa* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death). If by good fortune one develops the desire to take shelter at the lotus feet of Bhagavān, *caitya-guru* bestows His mercy so that one has faith in a *dīkṣā-guru* and *śikṣā-guru*.

It is only by the mercy of *caitya-guru* that a *mahānta-guru* is assigned to a person. *Caitya-guru* gives grace in two ways: some spiritual aspirants

become servants of Adhokṣaja Bhagavān, the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is beyond knowledge acquired by mundane senses, and some become *ādhyakṣika*, those who attempt to acquire knowledge through their mundane senses. People with the material conception conclude that sense gratification is the only goal for a living entity. People with this mistaken idea are known as *anya-abhilāṣī*, or those who have extraneous desires. They are not on the path of ultimate benefit (*śreyaḥ-patha*), but the path of short-term or temporary benefit (*preyaḥ*). By the deceptive grace of *caitya-guru*, only hypocrites get false kindness or mercy; honest, saintly persons who sincerely desire devotion are blessed with His true grace. Can one who wants anything other than being a servant of Bhagavān not be a hypocrite? [Those who want anything other than being a servant of the Lord—what are they but hypocrites?]

A *śikṣā-guru* imparts spiritual education only to a truly enlightened and surrendered disciple of a *dīkṣā-guru*. One may have numerous *śikṣā-gurus* who have no conflict of opinion with one's *dīkṣā-guru*, who bestows non-dual knowledge (*advaya-jñāna*, or knowledge of the non-dual nature of the Absolute Reality; Brahma, Paramātmā, and Bhagavān are different names of the one Absolute *tattva*). Such *śikṣā-gurus* are the real friends of one's *dīkṣā-guru*.

When a living entity attains divine knowledge (*divya-jñāna*), his spiritual form manifests; in other words, his *svarūpa* is revealed. At that time, preachers instruct him about the process (*praṇālī*) of serving Lord Hari. These preachers are known as *śikṣā-guru-varga*, or instructing spiritual masters. A *vartma-pradarśaka guru*, who is like the leader of an army battalion, is the predecessor of a *śikṣā-guru*. The *mahānta-guru*, who gives initiation (*dīkṣā*), comes between these two *gurus* [*vartma-pradarśaka guru* and *śikṣā-guru*].

Bhagavān, in the form of *caitya-guru*, desires

to bestow auspiciousness on devotees. After attaining that auspiciousness, devotees get the great fortune to have a devotee of Bhagavān as their *mahānta-guru* or *sad-guru*. By the grace of Bhagavān, a living entity (*jīva*) makes his life successful and blessed by having *darśana* (audience) of Śrī Gurudeva, who is a *mahā-bhāgavata* or topmost devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Question 422—Why is our worldly tendency to speculate (*manana-dharma*) not going away despite our having received a *mantra*?

Answer—It is because we have not actually accepted the *mantra*. Simply hearing the *mantra* uttered in our ear does not constitute acceptance of the *mantra*. Receiving transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) is known as *dīkṣā*. This transcendental knowledge pulverizes the abode of nescience (*avidyā*) and ignorance (*ajñāna*) within us birth after birth, and builds an eternal abode made of the strong walls of knowledge of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is known as Adhokṣaja, the Lord who is beyond mundane sense perception. While giving divine knowledge to Lord Brahmā, Bhagavān told him, "I am the real truth." This real truth, or *vāstava-satya*, is transmitted through potency (*śakti*), and that potency is the spiritual master. Various ordinary agents or messengers keep coming into this world, but those sole agents who are the very powerful messengers sent by God to suit the adoptability of all recipients are known as spiritual masters. We should develop a relationship with those experts. Only such a spiritual master can remove our *manana-dharma* and bring about a revolution (*yugāntara*) in the function of our consciousness.

Knowledge given by Gurudeva is not material or inert knowledge (*jaḍa-jñāna*). That knowledge (*jñāna*) is Absolute knowledge of Lord Kṛṣṇa; it is complete knowledge (*pūrṇa-jñāna*) that is the embodiment of divine cognizance (*saṁvid-vigraha*).

Mantra is fully sentient substance (*pūrṇa-cetana-vastu*) and it can save us from worldly contemplation (*manana-dharma*). It delivers us from the function of the mind (*mano-dharma*) that consists of pious and sinful desires. It bestows spiritual realization and qualification (*pāramārthika-yogyatā*); such is the power of a *mantra*.

Question 423—What is the duty or nature (*dharma*) of the soul (*ātmā*)?

Answer—The soul is unborn spiritual substance (*aja-vastu*); he has no mother (*jananī*). The spiritual function of the soul is not to hanker for sense gratification (*bhoga*) or renunciation (*tyāga*). The mood of hankering for material objects (*dehi dehi* —'give me this and that') is not inside the soul. The soul is the associated counterpart of the Absolute Truth (*para-tattva*). Desiring the happiness of the Absolute Truth (*para-tattva*) and serving the Absolute Truth is the function (*vṛtti*), constitutional occupation (*dharma*), and real self-interest (*svārtha*) of the soul.

Question 424—What is the meaning of *vilāsa* and *virāga*?

Answer—The word *vilāsa* is derived by prefixing *vi* to the verbal root *las*. *Vilāsa* refers to activities of the senses. *Virāga* means to stay away from attachment to sense objects and activities of the senses. When there is a high degree of *vilāsa*, *virāga* is absent; and when there is a high degree of *virāga*, *vilāsa* is absent. In this world, both worldly enjoyment (*vilāsa* or *jaḍa-sa-viśeṣa-vāda*) and worldly impersonalism (*virāga* or *jaḍa-nirviśeṣa-vāda*) are not beneficial (*aprayojanīya*). In the spiritual sense, *vilāsa* means to serve Bhagavān, and *virāga* means to renounce sense enjoyment (*bhoga*) for the satisfaction of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-prīti*). The two qualities of the spiritual mellow of neutrality or passive adoration (*śānta-rasa*) are: (1) dedication to Lord

Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-niṣṭhā*) and (2) giving up hankering for material objects (*tṛṣṇā-tyāga*). These two qualities are the *virāga* of devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa. *Vilāsa* also means to satisfy the senses (*indriya-tarpaṇa*) of the Divine Couple, who are engaged in spiritual pastimes (*cil-līlā-mithuna*) in an ever-fresh mood (*nitya-nava-nāvāyamāna bhāva*).

Question 425—Is transcendental sound eternal in nature?

Answer—Transcendental sound (*aprākṛta śabda-brahma*) is certainly eternal in nature. In the limited, bounded, restricted kingdom of the material universe (*kuṇṭha-rājya*), there is a difference between *śabda* (sound) and *śabdī* (what is designated by that sound). Thus, material sound (*jaḍa-śabda*) is temporary. In the spiritual abode of Vaikuṇṭha, the holy name (*nāma*) and the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is addressed by that name (*nāmī*) are the same Substance or Person; there is no difference between *śabda* (transcendental sound of the holy name) and *śabdī* (Supreme Personality of Godhead designated by that sound).

Question 426—According to the view of *jata mata tata patha*, the many different spiritual doctrines and paths are all valid, and all lead to the same ultimate goal and destination. Is this true?

Answer—The different opinions of people are mental concoctions (*mano-dharma*). *Bhinna-rucir hi lokāḥ*—innumerable people have innumerable types of ideas and interests. A path that was created previously, is being created now, or will be created in the future according to the interest of ordinary people cannot be *ātma-dharma* (constitutional occupation of the soul) or *sanātana-dharma* (eternal religion of the soul). In this material world, many opinions have been created based on mental concoction. The king of all

scriptures, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, states:

sa vai puṁsāṁ paro dharmo
yato bhaktir adhokṣaje
ahaituky apratihatā
yayātmā suprasīdati

All of the ideas and spiritual paths based on mental concoction arise from knowledge acquired by sense perception (*akṣaja-jñāna*). Actually, uninterrupted (*apratihatā*), unconditional (*ahaitukī*) devotional service (*bhakti*) to Lord Śrī Hari is the highest duty (*parama-dharma*) and spiritual occupation (*ātma-dharma*) of all living entities (*jīvas*); it is the only way to please the soul. The conceptions of other religions and paths might bring about a small degree of temporary happiness to the body or mind. Unfortunately, those attached to the bodily conception of life (*deha-dharma*) and to mental concoction and speculation (*mano-dharma*) mistake superficially desirable ideas (*preyaḥ-mata*) and paths (*preyaḥ-patha*) to be truly beneficial ideas and paths.

One should hear narrations about the Absolute Truth (*parama-satya*) from an authentic living source. Only then can a living entity attain eternal, topmost auspiciousness. Otherwise, one will always stray on the wrong path.

Question 427—Is there a special need to associate with pure devotees?

Answer—Certainly. Neophyte devotees (*kaniṣṭha-adhikārīs*) who have tender, immature faith cannot understand worship of the Deity form of the Lord; their material conception that the Deity is made of inert matter is not completely eliminated in their lower stage of spiritual development. They cannot understand genuine spiritual principles (*prakṛta-tattva*) or the etiquette (*maryādā*) of devotees. Therefore, saintly persons and spiritual masters instruct neophyte devotees, who have tender faith, to associate with pure devotees. Without such

association, one cannot attain eternal auspiciousness or engage in proper Deity worship.

Question 428—Some say that Deity worship is a means to an end; that it is only useful for some time during the process of attaining the ultimate goal (*sādhya*). Is this idea supported by the scriptures?

Answer—Never; this is an excellent example of blasphemy or offense. Śrīman Mahāprabhu said:

prākṛta kariyā māne viṣṇu kalevara
viṣṇu-nindā nāhi āra ihāra upara

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā* 7.115)

īśvarera śrī-vigraha—saccidānandākāra
se vigrahe kaha—satva-guṇera vikāra
śrī-vigraha ye nā māne sei ta pāṣaṇḍa
aspṛśya, adṛśya sei, haya yama-daṇḍya

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 6.166-167)

Meaning: It is the greatest blasphemy of Lord Viṣṇu to regard His transcendental body or Deity form to be material or inert in nature. The Deity form of the Supreme Lord is made of transcendental pure knowledge, bliss, and eternity. One who regards this Deity form to be a transformation of the mundane mode of goodness (*sattva-guṇa*), and who does not accept the transcendental form of the Lord, is certainly an atheist. Such a person should be neither seen nor touched. Indeed, he is subject to punishment by Yamarāja.

The Deity of Lord Viṣṇu is completely spiritual and consists of pure knowledge. It is not a product of human imagination like the forms of demigods.

'nāma', 'vigraha', 'svarūpa'—tina eka-rūpa
tine 'bheda' nāhi,—tina 'cid-ānanda-rūpa'

(*Caitanya-caritāmṛta Madhya-līlā* 17.131)

Meaning: The Lord's holy name, His form, and His personality (*svarūpa* or nature) are all one and the same; there is no difference between them. Since all of them are absolute, they are transcendentally

blissful.

The Deity form of Lord Kṛṣṇa is directly Kṛṣṇa Himself. *Śrī-vigraha*, the Deity, is the *arcā-avatāra* (Deity incarnation) of Bhagavān. The worshipable Lord of our heart (*hṛdaya-devatā*) manifests externally in the form of *śrī-murti*, the transcendental Deity.

Question 429—Who is an *ācārya*?

Answer—An *ācārya* is a devotee of Bhagavān who is dedicated to practicing (*ācāra*) and preaching (*pracāra*) the philosophy of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. An *ācārya* is devoid of material desires and hankerings (*nirapekṣa*), and he is liberated (*mukta*) from the clutches of the illusory potency of the Lord. He shows the exalted ideals of completely giving up bad association (*asat-saṅga-tyāga*) and continually discussing the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-carcā*). He talks about giving up bad association without any fear and without any expectation of material gain. Thus, he can free his followers and disciples from bad association; such a person is indeed an *ācārya*.

One cannot preach effectively unless one sacrifices his life for the sake of preaching. Only one who makes such a sacrifice can truly preach.

Question 430—How is a conditioned living entity, who is under the control of *māyā*, able to have the feeling of being independent?

Answer—Bhagavān is fully independent (*sarva-tantra-svatantra*), and we are like spiritual atoms within Him. The qualities of Bhagavān, who is the Complete Whole (*pūrṇa-vastu*), are present in us to an atomic degree. Lord Kṛṣṇa has complete freedom and a living entity has limited and partial (minute) freedom. A living entity can be averse to loving service to the Supreme Lord and absorbed in the material world due to: (1) hankering for sense gratification (*bhoga-unmukhatā*), and (2) practicing dry renunciation (*tyāga-unmukhatā*). There are two

paths: the path of material enjoyment (*jaḍa-vilāsa*), and the path of spiritual enjoyment and playful dalliance of transcendence relished through unalloyed devotional service (*cid-vilāsa*). No one can stay in an indifferent (*nirapekṣa*) or neutral (*taṭastha*) state; one will engage in either sense enjoyment or service to Bhagavān.

If one engages in devotional service all of the time, *māyā* cannot cover him. Thus, we should continuously perform devotional service. If there is any fault, weak spot, loophole, or distraction in our service, the illusory potency (*māyā*) takes advantage of that and puts us in trouble.

Question 431—When will our false ego of being the Lord or enjoyer (*prabhutva-abhimāna* or *bhoktā-abhimāna*) go away?

Answer—As long as we do not have the true ego of being a servant of Bhagavān (*bhagavat-sevaka-abhimāna*) and transcendental pride of being a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa (*vaiṣṇavī-pratiṣṭhā*), we will see this world as an object of our enjoyment.We will not have the spiritual understanding that this world is the property of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and that it is meant for His service and pleasure (*iśāvāsya jagat darśana*). In such a condition, the false ego of being the lord of everything continues to influence our intelligence (*buddhi*). Our propensity for sense gratification and bad consciousness can only be removed by transcendental knowledge.

Question 432—Why are we not able to depend on Bhagavān?

Answer—As long as one's intelligence directs him to depend on his own ability, his selfish tendency to only take care of himself and fill his belly, his independent mentality, and his worldly knowledge, one cannot surrender at the feet of Bhagavān. We will continue to give importance to the doctrine of the

ascending path (*ārohavāda*) until we develop *prapatti* (pious resignation) or *śaraṇāgati* (mood of surrender). Only when we realize that our power is very small, that our false ego is of no use, and that our efforts are futile will we be able to surrender and accept the descending path (*avarohavāda*). Only when the glory of Bhagavān's shelter arises in our heart will *śaraṇāgati* and *avarohavāda* also arise there. Therefore, one should stay where one is and hear Vaikuṇṭha-vārtā (*hari-kathā*) emanating from the mouth of sages (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa). Only then will all problems be solved, and only then will dependence on Bhagavān arise.

Question 433—Who is Bhagavān?

Answer—Bhagavān is *adhokṣaja-vastu*, which means that He is beyond the mundane senses. Godhead is He who has reserved the Absolute right of not being exposed to present human senses. He, who cannot be perceived by the material senses of humans and animals, which are inclined to enjoy sense objects, is known as Bhagavān. He has kept this right completely in His own hands. He has the right to reveal Himself or not.

Question 434—How does a living entity become bound in this material world?

Answer—A living entity has limited free will; he has independent desires. He becomes bound by *māyā* (illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa) due to misuse of that free will.

Question 435—What, then, is the significance of this verse of *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā*?

īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānāṁ hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati
bhrāmayan sarva-bhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā
(18.61)

[O Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa is situated in the heart of

all *jīvas* (living entities) as the Supersoul. Just as an object mounted on a machine may revolve, all living entities wander in the world under the control of the Supreme Lord according to their *dharma* (nature).]

Answer—This verse of the *Gītā* supports the following idea. Viṣṇu alone is the controller (*niyantā*) of all the *jīvas* and is the Supreme Lord. Bhagavān arranges results according to the *jīvas'* activities. A living entity is *hetu-kartā* (one who desires to be a doer) or *prayojya-kartā* (designated doer), and Bhagavān is *prayojaka-kartā* (actual doer who causes all actions and results). Being the designated doer of his actions, a living entity must experience the results of those actions, and this serves as the basis for his future actions. As *prayojaka-kartā*, the Supreme Lord is actually the arranger of all of those results (*phala-bhogas*) and the cause of all of those actions (*kārya-karaṇa*). The Supreme Lord (Īśvara) bestows results, and living entities experience those results.

Question 436—Does Bhagavān inspire living entities to use their minute independence properly or improperly?

Answer—If this choice was to occur by the inspiration of Bhagavān, living entities would always choose to serve Him and never choose to forget Him.

Question 437—How can we reach the philosophical conclusion (*siddhānta*) that everything happens by the desire (*icchā*) of Bhagavān, and that everything is His mercy (*kṛpā*)?

Answer—*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* answers this:

tat te 'nukampāṁ su-samīkṣamāṇo
bhuñjāna evātma-kṛtaṁ vipākam
hṛd-vāg-vapurbhir vidadhan namas te
jīveta yo bhakti-pade sa dāya-bhāk

Meaning: Only one who regards the results of

his past actions to be the mercy of Bhagavān and who calmly experiences whatever happiness and distress come according to his *prārabdha-karma* (reactions to pious and sinful activities), and who goes on living dedicating himself to the lotus feet of Bhagavān by body (*tana*), mind (*mana*), and words (*vacana*), is qualified to attain Your lotus feet, which are the shelter of liberation (*mukti*).

One who is qualified for permanent relief from this world thinks that if he blames the Supreme Lord, who is the embodiment of all auspiciousness, then he will never be free from *māyā*, the illusory potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa, due to lack of service attitude (*sevā-pravṛtti*). Devotees inclined to render devotional service show even more attraction to Bhagavān by regarding all inconveniences that they experience in life to be His mercy. Such devotees become easily qualified to attain the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, which are the shelter of liberation personified (*mukti-pada*).

Question 438—Are the sins that we commit part of Bhagavān's mercy?

Answer—No, the tendency (*pravṛtti*) to sin is only in the living entities for the purpose of testing them. Parents may put money, grains, scriptures (*bhāgavata-śāstra*), or other items in front of their child to investigate his interests, and he chooses accordingly. Bhagavān, who is an ocean of mercy, may seem to be merciless from the perspective of a nondevotee. However, whatever Bhagavān arranges is mercy, just as a kiss or slap from a father are both motivated by love for his young child (*śiśu*). If Bhagavān's mercy looks like punishment to us, we should understand that our serving temper (*sevonmukhatā*) and attraction to God (*bhagavad-anurakti*) are diminishing. Bhagavān is the shelter of all living entities. When a living entity approaches Bhagavān for His shelter, Bhagavān arranges many obstacles to test his sincerity and determination. It is

wrong to think that a doctor who treats a boil by cutting it with a scalpel is merciless. Similarly, ignorant people mistakenly think that Bhagavān, who is their well-wisher, makes arrangements that are cruel or inauspicious. *Māyā* manifests many kinds of tempting objects, and due to attraction to them, we sometimes do pious activities (*sat-karma*) to help others, and sometimes do impious activities (*asat-karma*) out of self-interest. Sometimes we are inclined to search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa's impersonal, undifferentiated aspect of divine light (*nirbheda-brahma-anu-sandhāna*), and sometimes we are attracted to the doctrines of Śākya-siṁha Buddha or Śaṅkarācārya. However, we cannot attain auspiciousness from such pursuits. The only way for a living entity to achieve auspiciousness is to hear, speak, and think about the pastimes of Bhagavān. Apart from this, there is no other way of welfare. Bhagavān does not interfere with the free will of living entities; He is not the killer of their conscious nature (*cetana-dharma*). It would be cruel of Him to take away free will, an essential quality of consciousness, from any living entity. Instead, He provides transcendental knowledge as to which activities are spiritual and eternal (*sat*), and which are material and temporary (*asat*). As Śrī Caitanya, He tells us, "Do not be satisfied with Jaiminī Ṛṣi's*abhyudaya-vāda*, the philosophy of how *karma* causes worldly distress and happiness, or with Śaṅkarācārya's *nirbheda-brahma-anu-sandhāna*, the quest for Śrī Kṛṣṇa's impersonal, undifferentiated aspect of divine light." These philosophies do not constitute proper use of one's atomic consciousness and free will. We should only perform activities aimed at serving Bhagavān. One should not do deeds in which there is no service to God.

Question 439—Why do we do things other than serving Bhagavān?

Answer—Ignoring service to Bhagavān and

busying ourselves with other things is our great misfortune; our contaminated intelligence is not able to understand that our only real duty is to serve Bhagavān. Thus, we think that other things are more important than serving Him. This misconception of ours is not going away despite repeated association with saintly persons. Due to aversion to devotional service, we are trapped in *māyā*, just as a fish takes a fisherman's bait and is captured. We waste our precious time trying to give enjoyment to family members like spouse, sons, and daughters, whom we will never see in future lifetimes. Sweating from head to toe, we toil for their enjoyment. We plant mango trees and painstakingly buy material possessions, but their fruit will not be received by us, but by someone else. We sacrifice so much for others whom we will never meet again after death, and who often squander what we have worked so hard for.

Question 440—Who can know the secrets of devotional service?

Answer—Only those who intimately serve (*viśrambha-sevā*) Śrī Gurudeva, the best among the followers of Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī and Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, can understand the deep secrets of devotional service. *Viśrambha* means faith that is very firm and affectionate. One should have the faith that Śrī Gurudeva is not an ordinary, mortal human being who has to suffer the reactions of his past *karma*. One should lovingly serve him with such faith.

The scriptures state:

yasya deve parā bhaktir
yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ
prakāśante mahātmanaḥ

Meaning: The real meaning of the scriptures is revealed only in the heart of a great soul who has firm, transcendental devotion equally for Śrī Bhagavān, and also for His representative, Śrī

Gurudeva.

Question 441—How can we get strength?

Answer—When one respectfully and lovingly serves his spiritual master, and also serves the holy name, one develops the unlimited strength of devotion (*bhakti-bala*) in one's heart.

Question 442—Can activities we do out of duty (*kartavya-buddhi*) be considered *bhakti*?

Answer—Feelings of duty and gratitude are functions of the mind, not of the soul. Activities done with a sense of duty are related to the mind, intelligence, and false ego. In contrast, activities of devotional service are related to the soul. Activities done out of duty provide only mental satisfaction, whereas activities done with devotion (*nava-vidhā bhakti*) provide happiness to the soul. Pure devotional service is performed with love and affection; it is the function (*vṛtti*) or nature (*dharma*) of the soul. The sense of duty comes from the mind, and it does not involve love and affection. Thus, *bhakti*, which is the function of the soul, is the only path to auspiciousness.

Question 443—What are desires that do not involve service to Kṛṣṇa (*anyābhilāṣa*)?

Answer—Desires other than that to serve Bhagavān are known as *anyābhilāṣa*. "I want to continue living in this world and enjoying sense objects in order to please my senses."

Question 444—How can we eliminate our sense of proprietorship (*kartā-abhimāna*)?

Answer—We will have to become more humble than a blade of grass; in other words, we will have to realize that we are servants of Bhagavān. Only then will the *karttā-abhimāna*—the misconception of confusing the material body with the

soul—go away, along with the false ego of being the doer and proprietor. Then, we will be able to happily chant *hari-nāma*.

Question 445—When will a living entity attain auspiciousness?

Answer—A living entity can know Bhagavān, who is real, spiritual substance, only when he takes shelter at the lotus feet of a bona fide spiritual master, or *sad-guru*. Thus, a living entity achieves auspiciousness when he serves Bhagavān by becoming a servant of a spiritual master.

Question 446—Whose prayer does Kṛṣṇa listen to?

Answer—Kṛṣṇa only listens to a person who prays with inner belief as follows: "O Kṛṣṇa! I do not desire anything from You for my own happiness. I accept whatever You desire. If distress comes to me in that, that distress is like bliss. I know that You are the embodiment of auspiciousness, and You are always bestowing mercy on everyone. Therefore, whatever arrangements You make for me can never be inauspicious for me. My welfare must be hidden in those arrangements in some form." He does not listen to anyone else's prayer.

Question 447—Who is a real disciple?

Answer—Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa-candra has given the responsibility for my welfare to Śrī Gurudeva. A real disciple thinks, "If I can completely surrender to Gurudeva's lotus feet, I will be qualified as a real disciple. It is my duty to bow my head respectfully, and accept whatever arrangements my spiritual master makes and whatever orders he gives for my well-being." A real disciple is not a sense gratifier who wastes his life trying to enjoy worldly sense objects with all of his material senses. Rather, he continuously serves Bhagavān with all of his

senses under the guidance of his spiritual master. All objects in the material world are actually instruments for serving the spiritual master. Thus, we should serve Bhagavān with all those objects under the guidance of a spiritual master. It is very inauspicious to try to enjoy things that are meant for serving the spiritual master or Bhagavān. A real disciple realizes this every moment, and thus his only pursuit and goal is serving Lord Kṛṣṇa. He sees his spiritual master everywhere, both inside and outside. While such a disciple considers himself to be a small and insignificant servant, his spiritual vision is great and profound (not superficial) so he does not see things meant for the service of Bhagavān as objects for his sense gratification. He always feels that no one in this world other than Śrī Gurudeva is his. His only self-conception is that of being a servant of his spiritual master, for whom he has *īśvara-buddhi*. Such a disciple knows very well that the spiritual master is more dear to Kṛṣṇa than His own life-airs (*prāṇas*), and that the spiritual master is a non-different manifestation of Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Gurudeva is simultaneously the transcendental form of devotional service (*bhakti-vigraha*) and the transcendental form of Bhagavān (*bhagavat-vigraha*). Thus, one cannot become a servant of Bhagavān unless he first becomes a servant of a spiritual master. Those who serve their spiritual master in this way are real Vaiṣṇavas and disciples. Besides them, all others are foolish persons with false ego who do not want to become servants; rather, they want to gratify their senses.

Question 448—How can one attain perfection in just one lifetime?

Answer—If a disciple completely gives up his independence, surrenders to his spiritual master, and renders devotional service to Bhagavān without duplicity under his guidance, giving up desires for

liberation and sense gratification, and following his orders and instructions properly, that disciple will certainly achieve the perfection of *prema-bhakti* in only one lifetime.

Question 449—How can we know Bhagavān?

Answer—We will have to listen to the pastimes of Bhagavān from the lotus mouth of Śrī Gurudeva. It is impossible to know Bhagavān without surrendering to the lotus feet of Gurudeva. Therefore, only those who take shelter at the lotus feet of Śrī Gurudeva can understand Bhagavān.

Question 450—What is the most severe offense against the holy name (*nāma-aparādha*)?

Answer—To consider Gurudeva, who takes us to the lotus feet of Bhagavān, to be an ordinary person like ourselves is the most severe offense against the holy name. Even if we engage in devotional service for millions of lifetimes, we will not achieve auspiciousness if we consider Śrī Gurudeva to be a mortal being; rather, many kinds of worldly desires will arise in our heart which will drown us in the ocean of material existence. Only Śrī Gurudeva can save us from the clutches of harmful association. We are unable to offer ourselves at Śrī Gurudeva's lotus feet, and unable to fully dedicate ourselves to his service, because we have the misconception that he is an ordinary, mortal human being.

* * *

Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa
Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma
Rāma Rāma Hare Hare

Instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda

(1) The statement written in the *Śikṣāṣṭaka* of Śrīman Mahāprabhu: *Paraṁ vijayate śrī-kṛṣṇa-saṅkīrtanam*—"Supreme victory to the congregational chanting of Kṛṣṇa's names" is the Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha's sole object of worship.

(2) Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the *viṣaya-vigraha*, the object of the devotee's *prema*, is the sole enjoyer, and all others are to be enjoyed by Him.

(3) Those who do not perform *hari-bhajana* are ignorant and murderers of their own souls.

(4) Getting to learn tolerance is one of the main duties of persons residing in a monastery (*maṭha*).

(5) Śrī Rūpānuga *bhakta-gaṇa* (devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa who are followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī) never think or speak of their own power; rather, they give all credit and glory to the root cause of everything, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(6) Chanting *śrī-hari-nāma* and direct realization of Bhagavān are one and the same.

(7) Those who engage in *pāṅca miśāla* or *pañca-deva-upāsanā* (worship of five demigods) cannot serve Bhagavān.

Note: The impersonalists imagine the various demigods to be forms of the Lord. For example, the Māyāvādīs worship five demigods (*pañcopāsanā* or *pañca-deva-upāsanā*). They do not actually believe in the form of the Lord, but for the sake of worship they imagine some form to be God. Generally, they imagine a form of Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇeśa, the sun-god, and Durgā. This is called *pañcopāsanā* or *pañca-deva-upāsanā*.

(8) Establishing a printing press to print devotional books, and preaching the glories of the holy name by organizing *nāma-haṭṭa* programs, constitutes genuine service to Śrī Māyāpura (the birthplace of Śrī Gaurahari).

(9) Everyone should perform *hari-sevā*

(devotional service of Lord Hari) together and with one purpose.

(10) Wherever *hari-kathā* is being spoken is a holy place (*tīrtha*, a place of pilgrimage).

(11) We are not doers of good or bad deeds, nor are we scholarly or illiterate. Carrying the shoes of Hari's pure and honest devotees, who are devoid of deceit, we are initiates into the *mantra'kīrtanīyaḥ sadā hari'* ('Always chanting the names of Lord Hari as our duty').

(12) Without criticizing the nature of others, one should correct oneself—this is my personal instruction.

(13) The *nīti* (conduct, moral precepts, philosophy) of Śrīman Mahāprabhu does not contain *kṣatriya-nīti* (rules for the warrior class), *vaiśya-nīti* (rules for the mercantile class), *śudra-nīti* (rules for the working class), or *yavana-nīti* (rules for the meat-eaters). From the words that He preached, it can be understood that He adhered to the pinnacle of *ṛṣi-nīti* (the conceptions and regulations given by saints and sages).

(14) Serving the Vrajavāsīs, who felt great separation from Kṛṣṇa when He left Vraja to reside in Mathurā, is our supreme constitutional occupation (*parama-dharma*).

(15) A *mahā-bhāgavata* (great devotee of the Lord) sees his spiritual master (*guru*) everywhere. That is why, the *mahā-bhāgavata* is the only spiritual master for the whole world (*jagad-guru*).

(16) If I desire to follow an eternally auspicious course (*śreyaḥ-patha* or *nitya-kalyāṇa-kārī mārga*) in life, I must hear only *śrauta-vānī* (instructions from a transcendental source—the timeless, divine words of the *ācāryas*), disregarding the theories of even countless people.

(17) It is appropriate that one likes the *śreyaḥ-vastu* (object that is eternally auspicious, *nitya-maṅgala-maya*).

(18) The confidential devotee (*antaraṅga-bhakta*) has no other desire than to render service to the sincere followers of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī (*rūpānuga-jana*).

(19) In order to follow the order of the Vaiṣṇava spiritual master, if I have to become a *dāmbhika* (cheat or hypocrite) or animal, or have to stay in hell for eternity, then I will do so. I shall drive away the opinions of the whole world with the blow of my fist, through the power of the lotus feet of the spiritual master (*śrī-guru-pāda-padma*). I am such a proud hypocrite and cheat.

(20) Other than the ear which submissively listens to *hari-kathā*, there is no means of realizing the *nirguṇa-vastu* (transcendental absolute truth which is above the three modes of material nature).

(21) The very moment we do not have a guardian, all the objects in our proximity will become enemies and attack us. The *hari-kathā* (narrations of pastimes of Lord Hari) of an honest, sincere saintly person (*saccā-sādhu*) is our only guardian.

(22) One who flatters is not a spiritual master (*guru*) or preacher (*pracāraka*).

(23) Life as an animal, bird, insect, *pataṅga* (flying insect such as a moth), or any other of the countless species is acceptable, but taking shelter of deceit is thoroughly improper. Only an honest person possesses real auspiciousness.

(24) Another name for *saralatā* (honesty and simplicity) is *vaiṣṇavatā* (the quality of being a Vaiṣṇava). Paramahaṁsa Vaiṣṇava-dāsa-gaṇa (the exalted swan-like servants of Vaiṣnavas) are *sarala* (honest and simple by nature); therefore, only they are the best among the *brāhmaṇas*.

(25) Helping to draw conditioned souls away from their perverted attachment to the material energy is the greatest compassion. If even one soul is rescued from *mahā-māyā's* (the great illusory potency's) fortress, that compassionate act is infinitely

more benevolent than the construction of unlimited hospitals.

(26) Every selfless, merciful member of Gauḍīya *Maṭha* must remain ready to spend two-hundred gallons of blood in order to nourish the spiritual body of every member of human society.

(27) Every single penny of the money collected by the servants of Gauḍīya Maṭha, by working assiduously day and night, is spent on stopping the tendency of enjoying the material world and is spent only on activities that bring transcendental pleasure to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's senses.

(28) Even if one very much likes it, one must abandon the association of persons whose propensity to always render service to Bhagavān in the company of self-realized souls has yet to awaken.

(29) Preaching (*pracāra*) without proper conduct falls within the category of *karma*, mundane activity.

(30) Our monastery (*maṭha*) has not been established to add fuel to the sense enjoyment (*bhogas*) of the sense gratifiers (*bhogīs*) and follow clever ideas from discussions of philosophical speculators (*jñānīs*). It is not our goal to consider charity of one or two rupees to be benevolent to the monastery. Only by receiving favor can one render service to the *kṛṣṇa-sevā-maya maṭha* (monastery meant for the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa).

(31) Śrī Bhakti-vinoda Ṭhākura jī has introduced himself as a sweeper in *śrī-nāma-haṭṭa* (the market-place of the holy name) and has thus revealed the transcendental pastimes (*aprākṛta-līlā*). It is befitting that we become instruments in his service of cleansing the material world. Hundreds of people like us should follow in the footsteps of the great personalities (*mahājana-anugamana*) and abandon the association of non-devotees (*bahirmukha-saṅga-parityāga*). Although such behavior of ours may not be palatable to everyone, it

will bring real benefit to us.

(32) By rendering service to Bhagavān and devotees, a householder's attachment to family life—home, family, wife, children, and so on (*gṛha-vrata-dharma*)—is slackened.

(33) Our main and original disease is collecting objects for our sense gratification, not for that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(34) We have not come to this world to become artisans and workers who work with and carve wood and stone. We are only propagators of the teachings of Śrī Caitanya-deva.

(35) We will not remain in this world for long, and by profusely performing *hari-kīrtana*, upon relinquishing these material bodies we will experience the ultimate reward of embodied life.

(36) The dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, the fulfiller of Śrī Caitanyadeva's inner desires, is our lives' sole desired object.

(37) Only after hundreds of births or even millenniums can one understand the very confidential truth behind the words of a preacher who fearlessly speaks the absolute truth without any expectation of material gain. Such a preacher must spend hundreds of gallons of blood to explain the truth to even one person.

(38) Bhagavān will not accept anything which is offered by a person who does not chant *harināma* one-hundred-thousand times daily.

(39) One will never receive the great fortune of becoming a maidservant of Śrī Rādhājī while in the conditioned state of having *anarthas* (unwanted habits and desires for various types of sense gratification). Those who discuss *aprākṛta-līlās* (transcendental pastimes) of Śrī Rādhārāṇī, the *parama-śreṣṭha-sevikā* (best of the maidservants of Śrī Kṛṣṇa), while in *anartha-yukta* and *anādhikārī-avasthā* (the unqualified state of being full of unwanted habits and desires for sense gratification),

are indeed *indriyārāmī* (desirous of enjoying sense gratification), *pracchanna-bhogī* (covered or hidden sense gratifiers), and *prākṛta-sahajiyā* (imitators).

Note:*Prākṛta-sahajiyās* are those who think that the *aprākṛta* (spiritual) *līlā* of *aprākṛta* Bhagavān is *prākṛta* (mundane) like the affairs of ordinary men and women, and that *aprākṛta-tattva* is attained by material *sādhana*.

(40) While chanting Śrī Nāma (the holy name of Lord Hari) when one's unwanted habits are removed, one will automatically receive a *sphūrti* (revelation) of the form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*), and pastimes (*līlā*) of Lord Hari. One should not try to remember such form, qualities, and pastimes artificially by one's own endeavor alone.

(41) Pretending to be initiated and actually attaining divine knowledge are two different things. [Taking formal initiation (*dīkṣā*) and actually attaining transcendental knowledge (*divya-jñāna*) are not the same.]

(42) Only persons who serve Bhagavān are indeed blessed. In spite of all inconvenience, suffering, and sorrow, one should keep on hearing, glorifying, and remembering narrations of Bhagavān's pastimes.

(43) Śrī Gurudeva is an exclusive, unalloyed servant of Bhagavān. His every activity is a perfect model of devotional service to Bhagavān. As long as I do not have such a vision of Gurudeva, my eyes shall remain blindfolded. By not attaining his mercy, not attaining divine knowledge, we cannot understand the glory of *guru-pāda-padma* (the lotus feet of the spiritual master).

(44) It is not true that one will be able to render service to Bhagavān only if one has money. The activities of devotional service to Bhagavān will be accomplished if one has unflinching desire (*nirbandhinī-mati*), resolute determination (*dṛḍha-saṅkalpa*), and service attitude devoid of pretense or

duplicity (*akapaṭa-sevāmaya-prāṇa*). You should not worry about money. It is not possible to maintain a *maṭha* (monastery) only by wealth or money. It is the nature of the sense objects to indulge a person who is not engaged in *hari-sevā* (devotional service to Lord Hari) in enjoyment of those sense objects.

(45) One will not attain liberation by studying Vedānta for an entire lifetime, or even for eternity. One will not achieve auspiciousness by holding one's breath for eternity or by levitating one's body ten or twenty arm-lengths above the ground. Everyone in the world will certainly attain auspiciousness if they hear narrations of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* from the mouth of devotees who are *bhāgavata-svarūpa* (the personification of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*).

Śrī Vinodabihārī — an ideal *guru-sevaka* like Śrī Kureśa

In 1925, as in previous years, the sixteen *kosa* Śrī Navadvīpa Dhāma *parikramā* was held on the occasion of Śrī Gaura Janmotsava. Thousands of devoted pilgrims performed *parikramā* in an enormous *saṅkīrtana* party. Śrīla Prabhupāda went on foot in the *parikramā* while the Deities of Śrī Śrī Guru-Gauraṅga and Gāndharvikā-Giridhārī were borne on the back of a large elephant. At one point, the *parikramā* party gathered in front of the temple of Prauḍhā Māyā in Kuliyā Dvīpa and the devotees listened to Śrīla Prabhupāda relating the glories of Śrī Navadvīpa Dhāma. Just then, the so-called *brāhmaṇas* and caste *gosvāmīs* of Kuliyā Navadvīpa attacked. They hurled bricks, stones, hot water and soda bottles, and their assault caused pandemonium everywhere. The pilgrims were running here and there to protect their lives, and no one cared for anyone else. The violent mob was searching for Śrīla Prabhupāda in order to kill him, but Śrī Vinodabihārī Brahmacārī immediately took him to a nearby *bhakta's* house for protection. There, Śrī Vinodabihārī quickly put on Śrīla Prabhupāda's *sannyāsa* dress and took his *daṇḍa*, giving his own white clothes to Śrīla

Prabhupāda to wear. After that, he sent Śrīla Prabhupāda to Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, and the mob did not recognize Prabhupāda in his disguise. Meanwhile, the police arrived. Some time later, Śrī Vinodabihārī reached Māyāpura safely, still dressed as a *sannyāsī*. The corrupt police suppressed news of this event, but the famous magazine *Ānanda Bāzāra* published an account of the atrocity. The educated and respectable people of Bengal were shocked to hear and read about this outrage.

Śrīla Bhakti-prajñana Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja Glorifies Śrīla Prabhupāda

Paramārādhya Śrīla Gurudeva humbly revealed his own identity during the Navadvīpa Dhāma parikramā of 1948. Grief-stricken and crying in great separation at the *samādhi* of Jagadguru Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda in Māyāpura, Śrīla Gurudeva said, "Svayaṁ Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is supremely merciful. Śrī Gaurasundara, non-different from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is also supremely merciful. Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is the Deity of mercy personified. And Śrīman Mahāprabhu's associates, the Six Gosvāmīs, are also causelessly merciful. These things I have heard. Without doubt I was present in one form or another during their time, but no one bestowed mercy upon me, because they knew me to be extremely heinous and sinful. But Śrīla Prabhupāda pulled me up by my hair. I am such a fallen wretch, such a great materialist with an uncontrolled nature, but he has made me a dust particle at his lotus feet. He who, due to his causeless mercy, is even more exalted than the Lord Himself, has today made me his own."

In this speech Paramārādhya Śrī Gurudeva described his own family by referring to his relationship with *Jagat-pitā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa; Śrī Śacīnandana Gaurahari; the *akhaṇḍa guru-tattva* Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, who is non-different from Baladeva Prabhu; and Their dearmost associate, Jagadguru Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. Nowhere did he mention his material family lineage.

Śrī Prabhupāda-padma-stavakaḥ

Prayer to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda's Lotus Feet

(Śrīla Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Gosvāmī Mahārāja)

sujanārbuda-rādhita-pāda-yugaṁ
yuga-dharma-dhurandhara-pātra-varam
varadābhaya-dāyaka-pūjya-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (1)

O Śrila Prabhupāda, your beautiful lotus feet are cherished by millions and millions of the purest and most qualified devotees, and you are the most competent personality to preach the recognized process for this era. Your sacred lotus feet are adorable, as they openly grant fearlessness and bestow the highest benediction to all living entities. I eternally offer my respects unto that charming effulgence that shines forth from the radiant lotus toe-tips of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda.

bhajanorjjita-sajjana-saṅgha-patiṁ
patitādhika-kāruṇikaika-gatim
gati-vañcita-vañcakācintya-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (2)

You shine forth as the natural leading monarch among the highest class of devotees due to your immensely powerful *bhajana*, and you are the exclusive, ultimate aim of the truly fallen due to your far-reaching merciful embrace. Your inconceivable lotus feet bestow full shelter for the cheaters and the cheated.

ati-komala-kāñcana-dīrgha-tanuṁ
tanu-nindita-hema-mṛṇāla-madam
madanārbuda-vandita-candra-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (3)

Your divine figure is so graceful and delicate, your skin so soft, and your towering form so radiant and golden. Your overwhelmingly beautiful appearance mocks the pride of golden lotus stems as countless Cupids offer their humble respects to your lotus toes which are like glowing white petals of the radiant moon.

vipulī-kṛta-vaibhava-gaura-bhuvaṁ
bhuvaneṣu vikīrtita-gaura-dayam
dayanīya-gaṇārpita-gaura-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (5)

You have widely spread the glories of Śrī Gaurāṅga's holy abode, Śrī Māyāpura-dhāma, and you have openly declared the nature of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mercy throughout the universe. Your graceful personality has planted the lotus of Gaurāṅga's holy feet in the hearts of your deserving servitors.

cira-gaura-janāśraya-viśva-guruṁ
guru-gaura-kiśoraka-dāsya-param
paramādṛta-bhakti-vinoda-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (6)

As the universal holy master, you are the eternal refuge for Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotees. You are always dedicated to serving your holy master Śrīla Gaura Kiśora, and you are the abode of utmost honor for Śrīla Bhaktivinoda.

raghu-rūpa-sanātana-kīrti-dharaṁ
dharaṇī-tala-kīrtita-jīva-kavim
kavirāja-narottama-sakhya-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (7)

The intense magnitude of your devotion allows you a glorious position within that intimate group of Raghunātha dāsa, Sanātana, and Rūpa Gosvāmīs. Your happy and elevated philosophical conceptions have crowned and seated you along with that esteemed personalilty, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. And you share friendly relations with Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and Narottama dāsa, being as dear to them as their very own lives.

vṛṣabhānu-sutā-dayitānucaraṁ
caraṇāśrita-reṇu-dharas tam aham
mahad-adbhuta-pāvana-śakti-padaṁ
praṇamāmi sadā prabhupāda-padam (11)

Since you are an exclusive servitor of Vṛṣabhānu-nandinī Śrīmatī Rādhikā, my bold aspiration is to take full shelter as a minute atomic particle of that shining dust that clings to your beautiful lotus feet. Your wonderful *śakti* can deliver the whole world. I eternally offer my repects unto that charming effulgence that shines forth from the radiant lotus toe-tips of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda!